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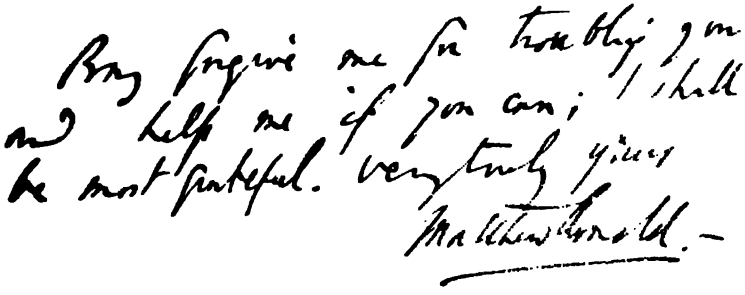

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MATTHEW ARNOLD

AND HIS RELATION TO THE THOUGHT OF OUR TIME

AN APPRECIATION AND A CRITICISM

BY

WILLIAM HARBUTT DAWSON

AUTHOR OF "GERMAN SOCIALISM AND FERDINAND LASSALLE," ETC.

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
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PREFACE

THERE is to-day a cult of Matthew Arnold; it is growing; it must grow. It will grow because many tendencies of the age are in its favour; still more because many influences are opposed to it, and because the healthiest instincts of human nature and the deepest interests of civilisation require that it shall combat these opposing influences, and overcome them.

To show what this cult is and why it must prevail is the purpose of this book.

Briefly, the cult of Matthew Arnold is the cult of *idealism*, using the word not, of course, in its philosophical meaning, but as indicating the pursuit of perfection as the worthiest working principle of life. In this sense every poet is an idealist; so, too, every political theorist, every worker in the sphere of social reformation; much more, then, the man who combines with poetic insight the trained judgment of the thinker and the practical sense of the world of affairs. Such a man was Matthew Arnold, whose idealism attracts by virtue of its very soberness and sanity, attracts because it appeals to no phantom of the imagination, presumes no conditions unattainable in the actual life of mankind,

but taking human nature as it is, recognising its rigid limitations no less than its vast possibilities, presents for acceptance a discipline of thought and a scheme of conduct both worthy and inspiring, and that the more since they carry the sanction of his own experience.

In his essay on Joubert, reprinted in the first series of *Essays in Criticism*, there occurs a passage which must always return to the mind which speculates upon the duration of Arnold's influence upon English thought. He is speaking of Macaulay, and he exclaims: "But for a spirit of delicacy and dignity, what a fate, if he could foresee it!—to be an oracle for one generation, and then of little or no account for ever. How far better to pass with scant notice through one's own generation; but to be singled out and preserved by the very iconoclasts of the next; and so, like the lamp of life itself, to be handed on from one generation to another in safety."

Is it too daring to believe that this better fate will prove to be his own? Already the censure which divided the praise showered upon him so freely during his lifetime has been forgotten. Another generation has risen up, to which the acuter of the controversies which he provoked appeal with no personal force one way or the other, and which can therefore weigh the issues involved more disinterestedly, more dispassionately, than was possible thirty or even twenty years ago; and this newer generation, accepting the positive thought of Matthew Arnold on its merits, finds it serve

indeed, in the obscurity and perplexity of the modern time, as a veritable "lamp of life."

The question may yet be asked—Was it, then, necessary to write such a book? Was ever message delivered by apostle of culture plainer than the message of Matthew Arnold? Did ever Voice crying in the wilderness utter its burden more clearly than his voice? It is here, I hope and think, that justification may be found for this endeavour to give unity to Arnold's ideas and theories, to his admonitions and warnings. For the Voice still cries, and it cries in the wilderness.

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I

CULTURE

CHAPTER I

ARNOLD'S PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

IN one of the earliest of Matthew Arnold's published letters, indeed the second in date, the future censor of the mind and manners of his countrymen foreshadowed with singular clearness the master passion of his life. Writing on March 7, 1848, he complained that England was not yet "liveable-in," that a wave of moral, intellectual, and social vulgarity was imminent. "In a few years people will understand better why the French are the most civilised of European peoples, when they see how fictitious our manners and civility have been, how little inbred in us." Youth has excused far more drastic generalisations in others, and if exoneration be necessary here the same plea may properly be advanced, for when Arnold thus lamented and predicted he was but twenty-six years of age. The words are not recalled, however, to serve as a test by which to compare maturer judgments, many of which, indeed, if less lively in expression, indicated much the same conviction, but rather for the evidence they furnish that his thoughts, tastes, predilections,

took very early in life the distinctive tendency which his literary career was later destined to confirm. Those who have a mind to read Arnold's writings through a microscope, concerned to prove occasional contradiction and inconsistency, will find their amiable curiosity rewarded by the discovery that upon many points of opinion he revised himself, and in none more noticeably than in his judgments of foreign nations. With wider experience, gained by travel and contact with the large world of living thought abroad, he ceased more and more to dogmatise: here an unfair generalisation was modified, there a faulty comparison was recalled. But in the belief that a truer and more diffused culture was the most urgent need of his own people he never wavered, and the zeal with which he strove to gain for this belief general recognition never abated.

Of his obligation to proclaim the message of culture he never had doubts: the only question which gave him scruple was the method that should be employed. The question really resolved itself. His gifts and tastes fell naturally into a congenial channel of influence; pre-eminently a scholar and a man of letters, literature was clearly marked out as his proper medium. Even so, there were obstacles to be overcome,—attachment to the life of pure reflection, dislike of the noisy world and its ways. In 1851 we find him still immersed in books, and public activity is no attractive exchange for the quiet of the study. "I read his [Goethe's] letters,

Bacon, Pindar, Sophocles, Milton, Thomas à Kempis, and Ecclesiasticus, and retire more and more from the modern world and modern literature, which is all only what has been before and what will be again, and not bracing or edifying in the least. I have not looked at the newspapers for months, and when I hear of some new dispute or rage that has arisen it sounds quite historical." His first literary essay was poetry, and when at last he touched the fringe of politics the year 1858 had come and he had just overstepped his thirty-fifth year — the age at which, according to Hippocrates, youth ends. For Arnold it was the parting of the ways. More and more the problems which stirred men's minds — problems political, theological, educational—drew him into the open arena of controversy, where mind sharpens mind as iron sharpens iron, and this arena once entered he continued for thirty years to address himself to the absorbing questions of the day in the hearing of an audience which grew with every year and which, even when least convinced by his unconventional attitude, seldom refused him a respectful hearing and even a hearty admiration.

From the first he took upon himself the *rôle* of the independent critic of society, and he has told us in many places wherein, in his view, the function of criticism consists. "The business of criticism," he says in one of his most memorable essays, "is simply to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in its turn making this known to create a

current of new and fresh ideas. Its business is to do this with inflexible honesty, with due ability; but its business is to do no more, and to leave alone all questions of practical consequences and applications, questions which will never fail to have due prominence given to them." [1] Hence he would be in the world of politics while not of it. Detached from parties, interests, prejudices of every kind, he desired to speak for culture, for reason, and for the truth of things, and for them alone. Writing in 1868, he utters his belief that "In this country the functions of a disinterested literary class — a class of non-political writers, having no organised and embodied set of supporters to please, simply setting themselves to observe and report faithfully, and looking for favour to those isolated persons only, scattered all through the community, whom such an attempt may interest—are of incalculable importance." [2] "To be a voice outside the State," he writes elsewhere, "speaking to mankind or to the future, perhaps shaking the actual State to pieces in doing so, one man will suffice. But to reform the State in order to save it, to preserve it by changing it, a body of workers is needed as well as a leader:—a considerable body of workers, placed at many points and operating in many directions." [3] To such a class of writers, to such a body of workers, free, untrammelled, impartial, living in fellowship with the

[1] Essay on "The Function of Criticism," in *Essays in Criticism.*

[2] Preface to *Higher Schools and Universities of France.*

[3] Essay on "Numbers" in *American Essays.*

world's best minds, susceptible to every new idea, liberal in thought yet cautious in action, he aspired to belong. Direct influence he did not seek to exert. Transformation of thought rather than practical reform was his aim, for to such transformation of thought he looked for the impulse which alone could lead to any wholesome scheme of social reconstruction.

"We, indeed, pretend to educate no one," he writes later in perhaps the most widely read of all his prose works, "for we are still engaged in trying to clear and educate ourselves. But we are sure that the endeavour to reach, through culture, the firm, intelligible law of things,—we are sure that the detaching ourselves from our stock notions and habits—that a more free play of consciousness, an increased desire for sweetness and light, and all the bent which we call Hellenising, is the master-impulse, even now, of the life of our nation and of humanity—somewhat obscurely, perhaps, for this actual moment, but decisively and certainly for the immediate future; and that those who work for this are the sovereign educators. Docile echoes of the eternal voice, pliant organs of the infinite will, such workers are going along with the essential movement of the world, and this is their strength and their happy and divine fortune." [1]

His path was not always a smooth one. Perhaps he did not always choose the way of prudence and ease. He conceived it to be his first duty to be honest with

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, Conclusion.

himself, his next to be honest with the world. Yet nothing is so difficult, or at least so unpopular, as honesty in opinion. Nearly everything is against it—the prejudice which makes so large a part of human nature, conventionality, conservatism, the clamour of the multitude which suffers no setter forth of strange gods, but clings with slavish devotion to its old fantastic deities. But Arnold never temporised, and of sophistry he was incapable. Truth was his foremost quest, and the truth as he knew it, without garnishment or reservation, he gave in turn; and truth is the severest test of magnanimity. Hence frequent conflict with those whom he desired to influence and to convince, with misjudgment and harsh judgment sometimes on one side, sometimes on both. But, as he writes in one of his letters, "More than half the world can never frankly accept the person of whom they learn, but kick at the same time that they learn."

The philosophy of life of such a man must always possess an absorbing interest, and to understand that philosophy is the best possible initiation to the study of his systematic teaching.

If one were to attempt to summarise in a single phrase the ideal which he sought to realise, and in a rare degree succeeded in realising, that phrase would be "the balance of life." To see all things, and above everything else life itself, in a true proportion was his constant aim, for he recognised that therein lies the secret of human completeness. Arnold was here essen-

Matthew Arnold

From a Photograph by Sarony

tially Hellenic in temperament, though his Hellenism was corrected and harmonised by a moral earnestness which the Greek character lacked. Was there contradiction here? The answer is emphatically no; the contradiction lay rather in the Greek conception of life, which failed to attach to practical morals, to conduct, due weight. This admirable equipoise, this harmonious development at once of the intellectual and the moral faculties, is surely one of the most distinctive marks of Arnold's character, and to understand it is to understand much else which might otherwise seem incongruous, if not inexplicable. The man who confessed that the best his intellect knew was drawn from the thought of pagan antiquity yet nursed in his breast a moral code as stern and austere as that of Hebrew prophet. The man who risked prejudice, misunderstanding, and disfavour—all that weaklings fear—by attacking the dogmas of the Churches and the creeds had in him more real religion than the best of Churches or creeds ever held. His head was brimful of secular learning, but his heart ever found its home in the Bible and the *Imitation;* "morbid," "not thoroughly sound," he declares the impossible spiritual *organum* of Thomas à Kempis to be, yet it is "exquisite." Remembering all this, we see how it was by no accident that his two exemplars both in antique and in modern letters were complementary, each correcting the other according to his deficiency. On the one hand were the Greek Sophocles, whom he apostrophises as

one "who saw life steadily and saw it whole,"[1] and the Roman Marcus Aurelius, from whom he learned to "keep the balance true and my mind even"; on the other hand were the German Goethe, "the strong, much-toiling sage," whose "large, liberal view of human life" so powerfully attracted him—Goethe who, in his fine and true characterisation,

> . . . pursued a lonely road,
> His eyes on Nature's plan,
> Neither made man too much a God,
> Nor God too much a man,[2]

and the white-souled Wordsworth of his own land, who taught him to feel, who sent him, after every new plunge into the current of actuality and distraction, back to the deep, quiet waters of reflection, to the life of inwardness.

The lessons of life are really very few if reduced to principles, yet it is one of the few that "happiness has no shirt." Arnold was never weary of preaching the eternally needful truth that satisfaction and sufficiency must be found within and not without, that man is his own best friend, and that what he cannot give to his life by thought and effort concentrated upon its harmonious development, no one else and nothing external can possibly give. Hence his insistence upon the absolute worth of the self. Not to copy others slavishly, not to bewail the fate which has set his course in one direction rather than another, not to

[1] *To a Friend* (*Poems.*) [2] *Obermann.*

be the drifting creature of circumstances, but to work out his own proper destiny, to overcome adventitious obstacles, and so to realise his true self—this is man's supreme duty, his unique privilege, and also the secret of his peace and contentment. This is the thought which runs through that fine poem *Self-Dependence*, beginning with the lament,

> Weary of myself and sick of asking
> What I am and what I ought to be,

and ending with the strain of triumphant assurance:

> Resolve to be thyself and know that he
> Who finds himself loses his misery.

"Find thyself!" That is part of the duty and part of the secret. But he who does not seek will never find himself, and with time for every other quest we have no time for the quest nearest to hand. M. Maeterlinck has philosophised upon the perpetual estrangement which exists between the outward self of action and the true inner life. "Nous vivons à côté de notre véritable vie," he writes in *Le Trésor des Humbles*, "et nous sentons que nos pensées les plus intimes et les plus profondes même ne nous regardent pas, car nous sommes autre chose que nos pensées et que nos rêves. Et ce n'est qu' à certains moments et presque par distraction que nous vivons selon nous-mêmes." And the reason he gives for this neglect to find the true self is that search sends the seeker to the sombre haunts of silence,—and let us go anywhere save there! "Nous usons une grande partie de notre vie à rechercher des lieux où le

silence ne régne pas. Dès que deux ou trois hommes se rencontrent, ils ne songent qu'à bannir l'invisible ennemi; car combien d'amitiés ordinaires n'ont d'autres fondements que la haine du silence?"

Arnold anticipates the thought in that striking Wordsworthian poem, *The Buried Life*:

> . . . But often, in the world's most crowded streets,
> But often, in the din of strife,
> There rises an unspeakable desire
> After the knowledge of our buried life;
> A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
> In tracking out our true, original course;
> A longing to inquire
> Into the mystery of this heart which beats
> So wild, so deep in us—to know
> Whence our lives come and where they go.
> And many a man in his own breast then delves,
> But deep enough, alas! none ever mines.
> And we have been on many thousand lines,
> And we have shown, on each, spirit and power;
> But hardly have we, for one little hour,
> Been on our own line, have we been ourselves—
> Hardly had skill to utter one of all
> The nameless feelings that course through our breast,
> But they course on for ever unexpress'd.
> And long we try in vain to speak and act
> Our hidden self, and what we say and do
> Is eloquent, is well—but 't is not true!
> And then we will no more be rack'd
> With inward striving, and demand
> Of all the thousand nothings of the hour
> Their stupefying power;
> Ah, yes, and they benumb us at our call!

In these days we hear much in praise of the "strenuous life," by which is meant the life that is crowded

with visible energy and outward action. Energy and action are enjoined as the one needful thing, reflection is depreciated as old-fashioned and, to speak very frankly, a mere impediment to progress. For has not mankind all through the cycles of its history been reflecting? Surely the time for activity has now come; so let us all be up and doing; life may be short, but at any rate it shall be "strenuous." So says one voice of the age, and a powerful voice it is. It was this gospel of fuss and bustle which drew from Arnold those energetic words in *Obermann*, words at once of protest and lament:

> But we, brought forth and rear'd in hours
> Of change, alarm, surprise—
> What shelter to grow ripe is ours?
> What leisure to grow wise?
> . . . . . .
> Too fast we live, too much are tried,
> Too harass'd, to attain
> Wordsworth's sweet calm, or Goethe's wide
> And luminous view to gain.

Strenuous in this sense Matthew Arnold's life was not, yet it was none the less a life of steady and systematic work, a life ceaselessly moving towards ends deliberately chosen as supremely reasonable and worthy of pursuit. Familiar though they are, the lines in Sir John Denham's poem on the Thames aptly describe this life of disciplined endeavour, of enthusiasm tempered by restraint:

> Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;
> Strong without rage; without o'erflowing full.

Has he not himself, however, described and passed judgment upon the strenuous life and its antithesis in that intensely personal poem *Rugby Chapel*?

> What is the course of the life
> Of mortal men on the earth?—
> Most men eddy about
> Here and there—eat and drink,
> Chatter and love and hate,
> Gather and squander, are raised
> Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,
> Striving blindly, achieving
> Nothing; and then they die,—
> Perish—and no one asks
> Who or what they have been. . . .
>
> And there are some, whom a thirst
> Ardent, unquenchable, fires,
> Not with the crowd to be spent,
> Not without aim to go round
> In an eddy of purposeless dust,
> Effort unmeaning and vain.

It was one of his profoundest convictions that English people suffered from excess of "strenuousness," a result, if we are able to follow him in his conclusion, of their religious development upon the lines of Hebraism more than of Hellenism. Hence his healthy revolt against Carlyle's gospel of earnestness, the preaching of which seemed to him very like the carrying of coals to Newcastle.

Of Arnold pre-eminently it may be said, as of Joseph Joubert, whom he so greatly admired, that he "cared more for perfection than for renown," and if he advised his countrymen to seek spiritual illumination by ac-

quainting themselves with "the best that has been thought and said in the world," he at least practised what he preached. In these strained and overcrowded days one reads with a feeling akin to amazement and despair of the liberal portion of his time which Arnold, even at the height of his literary career, dedicated to reading, and that not merely for the enjoyment and relaxation it afforded, but as part of a severe intellectual discipline. In a letter written January 1, 1882, six years before his death, he says: "The importance of reading, not slight stuff to get through the time, but the best that has been written, forces itself upon me more and more every year I live; it is living in good company, the best company, and people are generally quite keen enough, or too keen, about doing that, yet they will not do it in the simplest and most innocent manner by reading." System was the secret of it all. The great Napoleon's maxim, "Savoir se borner," was constantly upon his lips, and to the method which he introduced into his life, the care which he took to economise effort, to prevent the indifferent from overbearing the essential, among the countless claims upon his thought and time, was due the fact that this busy man —and of what a crowded life do his *Letters* speak!— had time for everything that was worth doing.

"But such efforts were centred upon himself and his own pleasure," says the advocate of the "strenuous life." It is not true, not even partially true, for to the fulness, and ripeness, and wealth of his own life were

due the influences and impulses which so powerfully impressed his generation, and which will yet stretch helpfully and beneficently into the distant future. One of his Notebook memoranda runs: "Es ist nicht genug zu wissen, man muss auch anwenden; es ist nicht genug zu wollen, man muss auch thun," and no man acted more faithfully up to this maxim. Self-admonitions on the value of time and the duty of unselfish effort abound, indeed, in that revealing work: "Grant that I may this day omit no part of my duty," "Vigilandum est et orandum ne tempus otiosè transeat," "Ein unnütz Leben ist ein früher Tod," "Numquam sis ex toto otiosus, sed aut legens, aut scribens, aut orans, aut meditans, aut aliquid utilitatis pro communi laborans." These words, from the *Imitation*,[1] might stand as the motto of his life.

And yet this man, who cultivated so ardently the inward life, whose great call to his countrymen was to look within, was nothing less than a recluse. "Calm 's not life's crown, though calm is well," he writes in one of his shorter poems. It would be idle to pretend that in worldly matters Fortune bore a grudge against him. It stands on record, indeed, that his own timely action alone relieved him from the necessity of "executing the Dance of Death in an elementary school"; yet if his genius did not receive the official recognition which it deserved, he enjoyed during his lifetime far more popularity, of a kind which he could legitimately

[1] Book I., chap. xix., section 4.

value, than falls to the lot of most literary men, and a wide and congenial circle of friendships enriched his private life. No man, in fact, was more human on every side of his nature, and no man had a keener perception of the good in life or possessed in stronger measure the faculty for extracting and appropriating it. Altogether alien to his nature and to his theory of life was the moroseness which distrusts every joyous emotion and would destroy the instinct of happiness. Challenging Bishop Butler's depressing view that man's business in the world is "to endeavour chiefly to escape misery, keep free from uneasiness, pain, and sorrow, or to get relief and mitigation from them," he replies: "In his main assertion that man's proper aim is to escape from misery rather than positive happiness Butler goes clean counter to the most intimate, the most sure, the most irresistible instinct of human nature. . . . But Butler goes counter, also, to the clear voice of our religion. 'Rejoice and give thanks!' exhorts the Old Testament; 'Rejoice evermore!' exhorts the New. This, and not mere escape from misery, getting freedom from uneasiness, pain, and sorrow, or getting mitigation of them, is what (to turn Butler's words against himself) 'the consideration of nature marks out as the course we should follow and the end we should aim at.'" It was the singular felicity of Joubert's nature, which sought happiness as a flower seeks the sunshine, that drew him to that lovable character. To understand the sympathy one

needs only to read an outburst like the following, spontaneous as the note of bird or the laugh of a child: "Pour moi, s'il m'est permis de me citer en exemple, je remplis de mon mieux, dans toutes les circonstances, l'obligation d'être heureux. Je le suis toujours autant que je le puis, et quand je le suis peu, je dis à Dieu: 'Vous le voyez, Seigneur, je ne puis faire davantage! Pardonnez à mon infirmité et au cours des événements.'"[1] Hence also his sympathy with Emerson, —that "beautiful and rare spirit"—whose dictum "We judge of a man's wisdom by his hope,"[2] entirely expressed his own mind; hence his impatience with Carlyle's uninspiring pessimism. "Carlyle's perverse attitude towards happiness cuts him off from hope," he writes; " . . . He is wrong; St. Augustine is the better philosopher, who says: 'Act we *must* in pursuance of what gives us most delight.'"[3] Where Carlyle regards work as the end of life and assumes happiness to be an accident, and hardly a desirable one, which may come or may not, but which must not in any case be expected, Arnold places happiness first, and regards work as merely a means to that end. It is, he says, "the due and eternal result of labour, righteousness, veracity."[4] So, too, in his essay on Eugénie de Guérin he warmly combats the doctrine

[1] Letter to Mdlle. Moreau de Bussy, Nov. 21, 1792. (*Correspondance de J. Joubert.*)

[2] In his essay on *Spiritual Laws.*

[3] Essay on Emerson in *Discourses in America.*

[4] *Ibid.*

of asceticism which has been elevated to so high a dignity in the Roman Catholic Church — "a doctrine which Protestantism, too, has adopted, although Protestantism, from its inherent element of freedom, may find it easier to escape from it; a doctrine with a certain attraction for all noble natures, but, in the modern world at any rate, incurably sterile—the doctrine of the emptiness and nothingness of human life, of the superiority of renouncement to activity, of quietism to energy; the doctrine which makes effort for things on this side of the grave a folly, and joy in things on this side of the grave a sin."

Here, again, his Hellenism insisted that to every one of the manifold forces and faculties of life due recognition should be given, fair scope be allowed. "Human nature is neither all senses and understanding, nor all heart and imagination," he writes in his *Essay on Pagan and Mediæval Religious Sentiment*, and in the lines addressed to the immortal Rachel he proclaims the complexity of human nature with an urgency which borders on audacity:

> In her, *like us*, there clash'd, contending powers,
> Germany, France, Christ, Moses, Athens, Rome.
> The strife, the mixture in her soul are ours;
> Her genius and her glory are our own.

Yet it is diversity in unity, and the unceasing conflict of powers and passions which seems to be the one element of certitude in self-knowledge is no proof that man is a piece of "magnetic mockery"; it proves only

the intricacy and subtlety of his composition. Even the conflict is governed by immutable law. So in the *Lines Written in Butler's Sermons*, he says:

> Affections, Instincts, Principles, and Powers,
> Impulse and Reason, Freedom and Control—
> So men, unravelling God's harmonious whole,
> Rend in a thousand shreds this life of ours.
> Vain labour! Deep and broad, where none can see,
> Spring the foundations of that shadowy throne
> Where man's one nature, queen-like, sits alone,
> Centred in a majestic unity.

On the other hand it is impossible to overlook a certain note of fatalism which is so frequently struck in his contemplative poems. Ardently though he loves life, it is the love of a man who wisely holds his joy within loose fingers, for joy is a winged creature of the air, who only hovers around us so long as she knows herself to be free. Life is good and happiness is good, and human nature is rich and bountiful, but the world outlasts them all. He was the idol of friends, yet even to friendship he claims "no natural right." Here, in fact, two Arnolds speak. At one time he seems to recognise no doubt as to man's freedom, and accepts his capacity for nobility as infinite:

> Yet the will is free;
> Strong is the soul, and wise, and beautiful;
> The seeds of god-like power are in us still;
> Gods are we, bards, saints, heroes, if we will![1]

But at another time the limitations which beset human

[1] *Written in Emerson's Essays.*

nature weigh heavily upon him and suggest perplexities from which he sees no escape. Thus, in *Obermann:*

> We, in some unknown Power's employ,
> Move on a rigorous line,
> Can neither when we will enjoy,
> Nor when we will resign.

The explanation of the apparent inconsistency lies doubtless in the mood of distrust and scepticism from which Arnold was no more exempt than any other idealist. Simply because his conception of life was so high, and because he set for himself and for others a standard of attainment so severe, there came to him moments in which he could almost believe that all was not quite well with the world, that a good deal of man's effort and aspiration was vanity, those moments

> When the soul, growing clearer,
> Sees God no nearer,
> When the soul, mounting higher,
> To God comes no nigher.[1]

It is a mood which comes to light very unmistakably in the poem *Self-Deception*, perhaps one of the most revealing of Arnold's utterances:

> Long, long since, undower'd yet, our spirit
> Roam'd, ere birth, the treasuries of God;
> Saw the gifts, the powers it might inherit,
> Ask'd an outfit for its earthly road.
> . . . . . .
> Ah, whose hand that day through Heaven guided
> Man's new spirit, since it was not we?

[1] *Stagirius.*

Ah, who sway'd our choice, and who decided
What our gifts, and what our wants should be?
For alas! he left us each retaining
Shreds of gifts which he refused in full.
Still these waste us with their hopeless straining,
Still the attempt to use them proves them null.
And on earth we wander, groping, reeling;
Powers stir in us, stir and disappear.
Ah! and he who placed our master-feeling
Fail'd to place that master-feeling clear.

And yet the corrective to this very doubt and incertitude was found in his own philosophy, the philosophy of a man pre-eminently practical, who pitched his way by the stars, yet never lost firm tread of earth; who strove unceasingly for the highest, yet always with the implicit reservation that, having honestly done his best, he would be satisfied even though there remained at the end something still to be accomplished, some summit which he could not breast, a goal which was beyond his present powers. Poems like *Human Life* and *Resignation* express this reasoned acceptance of the finitude of desire and aspiration, this content and serenity in the presence of a limitation and an incompleteness which it were bootless to challenge. Thus in *Human Life:*

Ah! let us make no claim,
On life's incognisable sea,
To too exact a steering of our way;
Let us not fret and fear to miss our aim,
If some fair coast have lured us to make stay,
Or some friend hail'd us to keep company.

Enough that at the end we shall know the truth, shall

see things plainly which now are obscure, shall look on life in its true proportions, and deceive ourselves no more!

> Yet we shall one day gain, life past,
> Clear prospect o'er our being's whole,
> Shall see ourselves, and learn at last
> Our true affinities of soul.[1]

It is this side of his character which explains the objective and unemotional attitude which he invariably holds towards the problems of society, an attitude strictly determined by reason and conceding little to sentiment. Here his influence is unquestionably directive rather than initiative, and such it was bound to be. He recognises that the best philosophy of social progress is neither a blind optimism on the one hand nor a hopeless pessimism on the other, but a chastened expectancy which anticipates from an ungrudging expenditure of effort results far short of perfection. To assume that the relationships of society can ever be adjusted to a complete harmony is to indulge a dream which is foredoomed to disappointment. What we may hope to do is to diminish the friction; but we must make up our minds that there must be a give and take; hence, while working for the best, we must look only for the second best, and be ready to accept that, if necessary, in discontented content. He warns us in the poem *Resignation:*

[1] *A Farewell* (one of the *Marguerite* poems).

> **Blame thou not, therefore, him who dares**
> **Judge vain beforehand human cares;**
> **Whose natural insight can discern**
> **What through experience others learn.**

In the short dual poem *To a Republican Friend* (1848) his abhorrence of violence, even under the fair guise of humane aspiration, is emphatically avowed, equally with a profound distrust of all projects of reform which do not take full cognisance of the actual conditions and limitations of human nature. Heart and soul he is with the victims of a false civilisation—"the armies of the homeless and unfed." Yet even pity does not blind him to the hard facts of life and experience, and these "prompt him to patience,"

> **Seeing this vale, this earth, whereon we dream,**
> **Is on all sides o'ershadow'd by the high,**
> **Uno'erleap'd Mountains of Necessity,**
> **Sparing us narrower margin than we deem.**

In his early essay on *The French Play* occurs a passage which, though part of a criticism of Molière's dramatic art, might well stand as a summary of his philosophy of life: "Only by breathing in full the storm and cloud of life, breasting it and passing through it and above it, can the dramatist who feels the weight of mortal things liberate himself from the pressure, and rise, as we all seek to rise, to content and joy." Content and joy fell to Arnold in no stinted measure, but he, too, had to breast in full "the storm and cloud of life." And to many, perhaps to most, people who do

not share his religious views no trait in his sympathetic and fascinating character appeals more strongly than the stoical fortitude with which he received blow after blow shattering his domestic joy. No experience of life tests the strength and reality of a man's religious convictions so severely as the sorrow which attends the severance of these sacred relationships. Then, when the ground beneath their feet opens and the floods of tribulation break forth, men cry unto their gods, whether of heaven or earth, for deliverance from the moment's agony. Oftentimes religious faith, though firmly rooted, bends under the strain; still oftener it happens that a fashion of unbelief, subjected for the first time to the test of supreme spiritual crisis, owns its emptiness and impotence, and scoffs at the very hopes which had nurtured it in the fair hour of ease. Once, twice, and thrice Matthew Arnold passed through this most searching of ordeals, and all that the world has been permitted to know of the manner in which he bore himself increases its admiration for his strength, courage, and consistency. Keenly as he felt each blow, he neither flinched nor faltered; in each sorrow and at the end of them all he stood erect and brave, a man in every fibre of his nature. Not only so, but the discipline, severe though it was, left him with his outlook on life unchanged, still finding in the beliefs into which he had thought and fought his way all the old satisfaction and sufficiency. No incident in his life is more affecting, none more instinct with a true poetic beauty,

than that described by his friend Mr. George Russell, who called upon him on the morning after death had snatched away his eldest son Thomas (November 23, 1868):

"And the author with whom he was consoling himself was Marcus Aurelius." [1]

It is questionable whether Arnold penned more pathetic words than those which he addressed to his sister (January 4, 1868) on the death of his younger son Basil: "And so this loss comes to me just after my forty-fifth birthday, with so much other 'suffering in the flesh'—the departure of youth, cares of many kinds, an almost painful anxiety about public matters—to remind us that *the time past of our life may suffice us!*—words which have haunted me for the last year or two, and that we 'should no longer live the rest of our time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.' However different the interpretation we put on much of the facts and history of Christianity, we may unite in the bond of this call, which is true for all of us, and for me, above all, how full of meaning and warning." It were impertinent to inquire how much of orthodox interpretation might be forced upon words like the foregoing. What Arnold did not tell us explicitly of the

[1] Arnold describes Marcus Aurelius in the well-known essay in *Essays in Criticism* as "perhaps the most beautiful figure in history. He is one of those consoling and hope-inspiring marks which stand for ever to remind our weak and easily discouraged race how high human goodness and perseverance have once been carried, and may be carried again."

inwardness of his religion was his affair alone. It is sufficient for the world that he afforded it an illustration impressive and almost sublime of a strong nature bowing humbly to the stern decree of fate, yet in the humility maintaining its manliness and dignity unbroken.

It is no part of my task to raise questions which belong to the province of literary criticism, yet it seems fitting to refer to Arnold's controversial style, seeing how largely this conditioned and limited his influence, at least within his lifetime. He tells us in one of his letters that for every variety of writing there came to him naturally the style best suited to the task in hand, and that this tendency of his mind to follow its own course he never resisted. Yet certain marks clung to every style adopted, and one of these marks was that raillery and badinage which he employed with such incomparable skill. He is never so happy as when poking fun at the Barbarians, unless, indeed, his victims are bishops, and when not overdone it is fun which not only his readers, but the Barbarians and the bishops themselves — and that is the real test — are bound to enjoy. Only once was the line of prudence seriously overstepped, and then Arnold voluntarily, though not very remorsefully, donned the penitent sheet. One of his favourite maxims was "Pour gagner l'humanité il faut lui plaire; pour lui plaire il faut être aimable." He was always amiable, but that did not prevent his banter taking at times an incisively satirical turn which produced irritation where he desired to

produce conviction. "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt," was the apostolic injunction. With Arnold the grace is always there, but often it is a condiment much more piquant which gives the seasoning. Excusing a certain too personal comment to which strong exception had been taken, Arnold pleads, "Well, the phrase had, perhaps, too much vivacity." Many of his phrases suffered from excess of the same kind. Perhaps his books would have been duller reading without them, yet they made him enemies needlessly. A fine sense of humour stamps any man with the hall-mark of a healthy humanity, yet the capacity to see the funny side of things, while it endears a writer to readers of kindred instincts, exposes him inevitably to the danger of giving offence, and into this danger Arnold sometimes fell. One would judge him to have been the most mirth-loving of schoolboys, for he allowed no opportunity of joking to pass unimproved. In a serious discourse on witchcraft in his *Last Essays on Church and Religion* he has to bring in evidence a Cambridge Platonist of the seventeenth century, and this is how he does it: "The worthy in question is very little known, and I rejoice to have an opportunity of mentioning him. John Smith!—the name does not sound promising." Emphatically it was a temptation to elude by any means whatsoever, but for Arnold it proved too strong, and at the price of a small joke, he, alas! earned the enmity of a large part of the human race.

There can be no doubt that his satirical style, carefully as he cultivated and greatly as he valued it, closed his books to many of the people who should specially have read them. The sympathetic reader applauds the keen thrust, the telling gibe, the searching irony; but it is not difficult to imagine the victim of these critical attentions, all as well meant as the cut of surgeon's knife, but, like it, piercing to the quick, indulging in strong ejaculations, and flinging the volume on one side. Perhaps he was too satisfied with the applause of his friends: his correspondence shows, indeed, how susceptible he was to appreciation, from whatever side it came, for it assured him that he was making an impression. Thus when his admirers—in part men who shared his views without sharing his utter freedom from malice—applauded his style and bade him write more of the same sort, he wrote more.

To those who are able to come to the subject without prejudice it should not be difficult to understand why Arnold has ever been an active irritant to one large class of people, and that the very class whom he desired most to influence—the Nonconformists. Here, too, he was perfectly convinced that the style which he adopted so deliberately was the one most effective for his purpose. Yet though it proved a style eminently fitted to capture for him an appreciative and responsive public, it did not capture the right public—the public that needed and still needs to be convinced. To the deficiencies of the Puritan mind ninety-nine out of every

hundred of his readers were sufficiently alive, and what he wrote on the subject simply gave to their own opinions forcible expression. But to bring home to the Puritan world itself a vivid sense of failing was the really necessary thing, and of that world Arnold has never to this day gained the ear. Through its own leaders and its own literature it heard of the efforts which he was making for its evangelisation, but hearing thus, through intermediaries hostile to the prophet's mission, it heard obliquely and partially, the voice distorted, the message incomplete, the urbanity omitted, only the fault-finding and the ridicule remaining. Never did it in any great measure study Arnold independently, at first hand, and therefore with free and open mind.

Nor is disregard, where regard was so much to be desired, the only penalty which Arnold has paid for the free exercise of a too facile imagination. By how many people is he known only as a skilled maker of epigrams? And what is more injurious to the lasting influence of a serious writer than this reputation? The epigrams are remembered—the books which contain them are first ignored and then forgotten. Is not Jean Paul Richter to-day chiefly read in quotations? And so the art of turning telling phrases upon which he bestowed so much pains, and in which he so much excelled, has proved a very questionable aid to his real influence.[1] No one will go to an author's books for

[1] During his American lecturing tour Arnold wrote home from Hartford, Connecticut, November 15, 1883: "The night

the sake of his epigrams; and when the question "Who was Matthew Arnold?" elicits the answer "The prophet of 'sweetness and light,'" the average man has all he wants to know.

On the other hand, upon absolute clearness and straightforwardness he laid the greatest stress, and here at any rate shortcoming cannot be imputed to him. "I long ago made up my mind," he writes in a letter of January 17, 1863, "that if one had to enounce views not current and popular, it was indispensable to enounce them in at once the clearest and the most unflinching style possible." And again the same year (May 19th): "One cannot change English ideas so much as, if I live, I hope to change them, without saying imperturbably what one thinks and making a good many people uncomfortable. The great thing is to speak without a particle of vice, malice, or rancour." It was due, no doubt, to his love of certitude that he affected a dogmatism which the reader would find much more trying than it is save that it is everywhere commended by perfect suavity. For whether he meant it or not, he generally manages somehow to leave on the mind of the one who might be disposed to differ from him an uncomfortable feeling that if he really does

before last I dined and slept at Barnum's. He said my lecture [on "Numbers or the Majority and the Remnant"] was 'grand,' and that he was determined to belong *to the remnant*. That term is going the round of the United States, and I understand what Dizzy meant when he said that I had performed 'a great achievement' by launching phrases."

not understand and go Arnold's way, the reason must lie in some mental disadvantage of his own. It was not without reason that the sister who was the recipient of all his literary confidences chid him for "becoming as dogmatic as Ruskin." Very characteristic was the answer: "I told her the difference was that Ruskin was dogmatic and wrong."

One other notable mark of his style is an exceptional fondness for quoting Scripture. As a rule the literary man eschews the practice as poor form; the Bible it is perhaps good to know, but it is not good to talk about it. Arnold protested against this banning of the wisest and most widely read book in the world as pedantic, and his protest took the most practical of forms. In a letter written to his sister (March 19, 1862) he justifies his frequent citation of texts, and the letter is the more interesting as it shows us Arnold in his literary workshop gauging the serviceability of his tools. "At a time," he writes, "when religion penetrated society much more than it does now and in the seventeenth century they were very common, and if they are used seriously I see no objection to them. Burke used them even in his time. The Bible is the only book well enough known to quote as the Greeks quoted Homer, sure that the quotation would go home to every reader. It is quite astonishing how a Bible sentence clinches and sums up an argument. 'Where the State's treasure is bestowed,' etc., for example, saved me at least half a column of disquisition. The Methodists do not

mind it the least; they like it, and this is much in its favour." A habit thus early formed grew upon him, until for the appropriate Biblical passage the reader came to look as naturally as for the inevitable fling at the Philistines. It figures alike in theological discourse and political tractate, in critical essay and school report, and not unseldom he relied upon an attractive text to cover the deficiencies of an argument which otherwise might have failed to impress. Yet all was done with an utter absence of affectation; the absolute sincerity of the man and his freedom from the slightest suspicion of cant gave naturalness and distinction to a practice which in others might have been intolerable.

Which is Arnold's best prose work? Since he himself seems to have had periodical favourites it cannot be expected that even his closest readers will agree. To his sister he wrote on October 8, 1884, that some chapters in *God and the Bible* he found on then revising them to be "the best prose I have ever succeeded in writing." That, however, was a criticism of style rather than of subject-matter. Again, of *Literature and Dogma* he says, in the latest Preface to that work, that it is "of all my books in prose the one most important (if I may say so) and most capable of being useful." For just as Goethe liked to think in old age that his *Theory of Colours* would perpetuate his name when his poems had been forgotten, so Arnold at times seemed to value his contributions to theology, upon

which he could not claim to speak with special authority, more highly than his theories of education and culture, upon which his word carried the sanction of law. Finally we have it on the authority of Mr. George Russell that the year before his death (namely, in 1887) he declared that *Discourses in America* "was the book by which, of all his prose writings, he should most wish to be remembered." And yet there must be many admirers of Arnold to whom *Culture and Anarchy* will appear to be the book which his country and his countrymen most needed from his pen, and who will unreservedly endorse Kingsley's cryptic judgment upon it as "an exceeding wise and true book, and likely as such to be little listened to this autumn, but to sink into the ground and die and bear fruit next spring—when the spring comes."

CHAPTER II

THE MISSION OF CULTURE

I

UPON no subject is Matthew Arnold more stimulating, upon none has he spoken to his countrymen more aptly and more seasonably—one wishes it might with equal truth be added, more persuasively—than upon culture. "English civilisation," he writes in one place, "the humanising, the bringing into one harmonious and truly humane life, of the whole body of English society—that is what interests me." Certainly that is what interested him pre-eminently. It is possible that the distinction cannot be claimed for him that he enounces truths hitherto unregarded, but next to the creation of new ideals no higher service can be done for mankind than to bring old ideals to light. This was his great and worthy achievement. Culture has had its apostles, its saints, even its martyrs, in every era—men who have themselves resolutely lived the life of the spirit and have affirmed unwearyingly its claims and its high dignity. Nor has there ever been a period

in our own history, since the torch of progress was lighted at the Renaissance, when culture has ceased to be regarded as a supreme national concern. Successive ages may have applied themselves to the pursuit of knowledge with varying degrees of ardour and absorption, but where the movement of civilisation has been temporarily impeded or threatened the hindrances have, as a rule, been external rather than developments of the national life itself.

What, then, gave Arnold's advocacy of culture its peculiar timeliness and value? Chiefly the occurrence and the influence of two antecedent events, one political and the other social, which have contributed very largely to the making and moulding of modern England. The first was the change in the balance of political power brought about by franchise legislation early in the 'thirties, and the other was the concurrent final triumph of industrialism. The Reform Act of 1832 may be said to have discovered the middle class, as a supplementary statute of the 'eighties brought into full light the working class. Before that Act was passed the middle class was neither worse nor better, neither less intelligent nor more, than after it, yet it played but a secondary and feeble part on the visible stage of the national life. Commercially it was of some account; socially it was still negligible; politically its chief interest for the ruling class hitherto had been its serviceability in perpetuating, in a day when voters were everywhere few and most men had their price,

the aristocratic basis of government. But while the middle class was thus comparatively impotent in public affairs, it was, thanks to its instinct for trade and industry, winning for itself an economic position of growing influence. The factory system, which in the absence of regulative laws was being built up upon the physical wreck and the moral degradation of the manual workers, evolved an essentially modern type of life and character, a type in which elemental energy and rude force of will were combined with an engrossing material ambition which set no bounds to its endeavour. Side by side with the new industrialists grew also in numbers and in strength the old trading and merchant class, stimulated by expanding markets at home and the discovery of fresh fields to conquer abroad, and from the natural alliance of these two social elements, drawn together by common interests and ideals, proceeded a new and homogeneous middle-class consciousness which was destined to influence powerfully the national life and thought in many directions.

But while the mercantile middle class was accumulating wealth with a rapidity unknown before, and while it was thus acquiring a unique political standing, in education it still kept deplorably behind. More and more power was passing from the aristocratic class to the class below, yet the new wealth lacked the old refinement, the new repository of political and social influence lacked the balance, the dignity, the

suavity of manner which made the aristocracy, in spite of its limitations, a civilising agency of conspicuous value. On the Continent the industrial movement had barely begun to take root, and there the thought and energy of the Western Governments and nations at least were concentrated upon the development of their educational systems. While England was building factories Germany and France were building schools, and the English industrialist, thriving upon his growing trade with these benighted countries, which could not even make their own cotton and cloth, reflected with pride upon his own superior enterprise, and thanked fate that he was not as the foreigners. He did not know that these despised foreigners were all the time making brains, and that in the end it was the school and not the factory which would tell in the race even for commercial leadership and mastery.

In the sagacious survey of English life which he published the year after the passing of the great Reform Act, under the title *England and the English*, and in which he anticipated by a generation much of Arnold's best criticism of the national thought and character, manners and morals, Lord Lytton deplored the narrow education of the trading classes of that day. "English themes," he writes, " usually make a part of their education instead of Latin Sapphics; but as critical lectures do not enlighten and elevate the lesson, the utmost acquired is a style tolerably grammatic. Religion is more attended to; and explanations of the

Bible are sometimes a weekly lesson. . . . Generally speaking, all schools intended to form the trader pay more attention to religion than those that rear the gentleman. Religion may not be minutely explained, but it is much that its spirit is attended to, and the pupil carries a reverence for it in the abstract through life, even though, in the hurry of commercial pursuits, he may neglect its principles. But if the spirit of religion is more maintained in their education, the science of morals in its larger and abstruser principles is equally neglected. Moral works, by which I mean the philosophy of morals, make no part of their general instruction; they are not taught, like the youth of Germany, to think—to reflect—so that goodness may sink, as it were, into their minds and pervade their notions as well as command their vague respect. Hence they are often narrow and insulated in their moral views, and fall easily in after life into that great characteristic error of considering appearances as the substance of virtues."

Written without special tendency, this criticism, nevertheless, brings into relief the very deficiencies which, in Arnold's view, the era of industrial ascendency had imposed upon middle-class England:—an education narrow and starved, manners neglected, materialism victorious, a religious life crude, warped, and barren, in short, a more or less superficial ethic of conduct set up as a complete substitute for the culture which includes both manners and morality, as well as

the discipline of the intellect. It was his recognition of the wrong lines which middle-class development had followed, and of the immense evils — evils further aggravated in his day — which this development had inflicted upon the entire texture of English life, that led him to come forward with an eloquent message at once of urgent warning and of earnest admonition.

II

Twenty-six is not the most soberly critical time of life, and Arnold would probably not have bound himself to every judgment passed, every comparison made in a letter written by him in May, 1848, yet this document is of peculiar interest for the evidence it affords that even then he saw clearly wherein the intellectual defects of his countrymen lay, though it was not so clear to him that he was to attempt the thankless mission of the transformer. "How plain it is now," he writes, "though an attention to the comparative literatures for the last fifty years might have instructed any one of it, that England is in a certain sense far behind the Continent. In conversation, in the newspapers, one is so struck with the fact of the utter insensibility, one may say, of people to the number of ideas and schemes now ventilated on the Continent, —not because they have judged them or seen beyond them, but from sheer habitual want of wide reading and thinking. I am not sure but I agree in Lamartine's prophecy that one hundred years hence the

Continent will be a great united Federal Republic, and England, all her Colonies gone, in a dull steady decay." Arnold's hope for England grew with his years, yet so did his conviction that her greatest need was conversion from the mechanical life of action, to which she had become habituated, to a life of thought and inwardness. As neglect of culture had been her bane in the past, through application to culture would alone come her salvation. "It is very animating," he writes in October, 1863, "to think that one at last has a chance of *getting at* the English public. Such a public as it is, and such a work as one wants to do with it!"

Of this conviction of England's intellectual faults, of England's intellectual needs, and of his power to help in her regeneration, a book bearing the arresting and faultlessly chosen title *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) was the most valuable and lasting fruit. It was not the first time that he touched the question with the pen. In earlier writings he had beaten about the bush,—reconnoitred, one might better say, by way of learning the presence and the strength of the forces against which he was to contend; often, indeed, administering vigorous thrust and cut as opportunity allowed. In *Culture and Anarchy* was fought culture's battle royal, for which her champion had long been preparing, with the ignorance and materialism of the age. Of no other of his books did he so confidently affirm its truthfulness and necessity, and judging it after an interval of thirty

years he would be a bold critic who disputed the writer's claim.[1] Opinion will always differ as to his principles of treatment, yet granting that the method followed and the temper preserved are not consistently those of the philosopher — and Arnold continually avows, with characteristic half-serious mockery, that he is sadly unphilosophical, unsystematic, and discursive in thought;—granting that the book loses from the fact of its being weighted with trivial, disturbing, and (reading at a distance of time) almost irritating allusions to men and topics of the transient hour; and that the writer's object evidently is to *force* attention, by violent means if need be, but, at whatever cost, to hold the reader's mind and make him reflect:—granting all this, the solid thought contained in *Culture and Anarchy* is nevertheless indisputable, and if its value was great for his own day, it is infinitely greater for ours. And yet in pointing his arguments by banter, and treating serious questions with a levity which made austere critics of style shudder, Arnold was acting on a conviction that only thus could he move the mass of people and influence them against their will.[2]

[1] "You will see it will have a considerable effect in the end, and the chapters on Hellenism and Hebraism are in the main, I am convinced, so true that they will form a kind of centre for English thought and speculation on the matters treated in them."—Letter of June 12, 1869.

[2] "Partly nature, partly time and study, have also by this time taught me thoroughly the precious truth that everything turns upon one's exercising the power of *persuasion*, of *charm*; that without this all energy, reasoning power, acquirement, are

To impress them by pure appeal to reason he knew was impossible, for his great lament was that their reason slumbered and was deaf to all call.

It was no part of his endeavour, no part of his desire, to educate people. His work and his influence were intended to act indirectly, not directly, on the line of suggestion and stimulus rather than immediate illumination. You cannot go to the man in the street and ask point-blank, as Gretchen asked concerning Heinrich's religion, "How stands the higher life with you, my friend? Have you culture?" Nor can culture be imparted to those who are unprepared for its reception: offer holy things to the general, and they will only turn and rend you. What he sought to do was to create in the national mind a vivid sense of deficiency in the things that belong to the intellect; to make people reflect, in the belief that reflection would convict them of error and lead them to apply themselves with self-impelled alacrity to life's ideal end—"im Ganzen, Guten, Wahren resolut zu leben."

In the Preface to *Culture and Anarchy* he tells us that the purpose of the work is "to recommend culture as the great help out of our present difficulties," and he defines culture as the "pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been

thrown away and only render their owner more miserable. Even in one's ridicule one must preserve a sweetness and good humour."—Letter of October 29, 1863.

thought and said in the world; and through this knowledge turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits, which we now follow staunchly but mechanically, vainly imagining that there is a virtue in following them staunchly which makes up for the mischief of following them blindly." While, however, culture implies, first, the perfection of the individual, it provides the incentive to endeavour after universal perfection, since only when this has been realised will the full aim and intent of the true idea of culture be attained. And this perfection is only possible in so far as a man accepts "worthy notions of reason and the will of God."[1] Culture, therefore, places thought before action, since it is of infinitely greater importance that a man shall know what he may wisely say than that he shall indulge in torrents of futile oratory for the purpose of demonstrating his glorious right of free speech; that he shall know what he may wisely do than that he shall spend his time and strength in aimless, unconsidered activity.

But of what are we to seek the perfection? The perfection of the whole nature and life, says Arnold; for true culture is "a harmonious perfection of all the powers which make the beauty and worth of human

[1] Compare Milton (*On Education*): "The end, then, of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love Him, to imitate Him, to be like Him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith, makes up the highest perfection."

nature, and is not consistent with the over-development of any one power at the expense of the rest." [1] Hence culture, like religion which so conspicuously contributes to it, acts inwardly. It consists in "an inward condition of the mind and spirit, not in an outward set of circumstances." "Religion says 'The kingdom of God is within you,' and culture, in like manner, places human perfection in an internal condition, in the growth and predominance of our humanity proper, as distinguished from our animality. It places it in the ever-increasing efficacy and in the general harmonious expression of those gifts of thought and feeling which make the peculiar dignity, wealth, and happiness of human nature." [2] And again: "It is in making endless additions to itself, in the endless expansion of its powers, in endless growth in wisdom and beauty, that the spirit of the human race finds its ideal. To reach this ideal culture is an indispensable aid, and that is the true value of culture. Not a having and a resting, but a growing and a becoming, is the character of perfection as culture conceives it, and here, too, it coincides with religion." [3]

And answering more in detail the question how prefection is to be realised through culture, he says: "Through all the voices of human experience which have been heard upon it, of art, science, poetry, philosophy, history, as well as of religion, in order to give a greater fulness and certainty to its solution." To

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, chapter i. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*

culture, therefore, nothing comes amiss which can in any way help forward human excellence, for it is itself the comprehensive expression of excellence.

Thus the master-word of culture is totality, for until the whole man is perfect the ends of culture are not realised in him: a partly cultivated man is an uncultivated man. And culture is not less a universal interest, because, until all men are perfect, culture cannot be said to prevail: if one member suffers the other members suffer with it. "Perfection, as culture conceives it, is not possible while the individual remains isolated." Hence the individual, while striving after his own development, is required, on pain of personal deterioration, "to carry others along with him in his march towards perfection, to be continually doing all he can to enlarge and increase the volume of the human stream sweeping thitherward.

"The only absolute good, the only absolute and eternal object prescribed to us by God's law, or the divine order of things, is the progress towards perfection —our own progress towards it and the progress of humanity. . . . Culture has one great passion, the passion for sweetness and light. It has one even greater!—the passion for making them *prevail*. It is not satisfied till we *all* come to a perfect man; it knows that the sweetness and light of the few must be imperfect until the raw and unkindled masses of humanity are touched with sweetness and light."

So earnest and persistent is his enforcement of cul-

ture's universal mission that even the poverty, squalor, and brutality which he sees in the East End of London only strengthen his conviction that until even these grosser social blemishes are removed it will be idle to regard that mission as accomplished:—

"So all our fellow men, in the East of London and elsewhere, we must take along with us in the progress towards perfection, if we ourselves really, as we profess, want to be perfect; and we must not let the worship of any fetish, any machinery, such as manufactures or population—which are not, like perfection, absolute goods in themselves, though we think them so—create for us such a multitude of miserable, sunken, and ignorant human beings, that to carry them along with us is impossible, and perforce they must for the most part be left by us in their degradation and wretchedness." [1]

Such is the answer to the superficial objection that culture is a euphemism for selfishness. It begins with self, as every virtue and every excellence does and must, for until the individual is conscious of an aspiration after perfection of nature the idea of culture has no meaning for him. The more, however, a man seeks culture and imbibes its true spirit, the more will he recognise that his own perfection is bound up with the perfection of others. This, says Arnold, is a view in which "all the love of our neighbour, the impulses towards action, help, and beneficence, the desire for

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, chapter vi.

removing human error, clearing human confusion, and diminishing human misery, the noble aspiration to leave the world better and happier than we found it—motives eminently such as are called social—come in as part of the grounds of culture, and the main and pre-eminent part. Culture . . . [thus] . . . moves by the force, not merely or primarily of the scientific passion for pure knowledge, but also of the moral and social passion for doing good." [1] Not only so, but this passion for doing good derives vastly increased force and effectiveness when it is regarded as a part of culture, since it manifests itself in rational and regulated effort for reformation, and no longer in undisciplined activity and vain beating of the air, for where it has formerly acted by blind intuition reason now comes in and guides good impulse by judgment. So to the ethical teacher who maintained that social usefulness really means "losing oneself in a mass of disagreeable and mechanical details," Arnold replies that the most valuable social service which a man can render is to "find himself." And how? By finding "the intelligible law of things." Placing himself under this law, a man is released from the thrall of prejudice and preconception, and by gaining the free atmosphere of thought he becomes for the first time

[1] In a letter of February 22, 1868, he writes: "The *Spectator* does me a very bad service by talking of my contempt for unintellectual people. It is not at all true, and it sets people against me."

capable of living a rational life as an individual and of serving society intelligently.

This idea of culture as an inward condition of perfection is obviously at variance with much of the mechanical and material civilisation most esteemed amongst us. "The actual civilisation of England and America," he writes in *Irish Essays*, is "a civilisation with many virtues, but without lucidity of mind and without largeness of temper. And now we English, at any rate, have to acquire them, and to learn the necessity for us 'to live,' as Emerson says, 'from a greater depth of being.' The sages and the saints alike have always preached this necessity; the so-called practical people and men of the world have always derided it."

To the Englishman's blind faith in machinery in particular Arnold shows little consideration; it is an idol, and before his worship can be directed to the highest and truest objects of desire the idol must be put away. And what are the possessions and institutions most valued and exalted amongst us but such machinery?—freedom, wealth, population, even those religious organisations with which England is so amply provided? These things are not ends in themselves, though generally regarded as such, but instruments—machinery by the aid of which the purposes of culture may be served, though only if they are properly employed.

Take political liberty. It is a valuable good so long as it is not converted into a fetish and credited with talismanic powers. This, however, is just the danger

which exists in England, where everybody has been taught to believe that "the having a vote, like the having a large family, or a large business, or large muscles, has in itself some edifying and perfecting effect upon human nature." Whether political liberty be really serviceable or not depends on whether the owner of that liberty is intelligent and enlightened enough to understand his duties as a citizen and is determined to discharge those duties with honesty and rectitude. Hence Arnold holds that "The idea which culture sets before us of perfection — an increased spiritual activity, having for its character increased sweetness, increased light, increased life, increased sympathy—is an idea which the new democracy needs far more than the idea of the blessedness of the franchise, or the wonderfulness of its own industrial performances."

Again, it is another of the Englishman's proudest claims that nowhere is speech so free as within his own shores. However it may be with other unfortunate countries, here, at any rate, a man can say what he likes, when and where he likes. Vain boast, says Arnold, unless his saying is wise and worthy to be said, for otherwise what profit the freest thought and utterance in the world? Nay, unless that condition be fulfilled, the very wideness of freedom's limits may be the standard of its disadvantage and harm for the man himself and the community to which he belongs.

So, too, with the current ideas as to national great-

ness. The political economist will tell you that national pre-eminence consists in material wealth; the commercial man, accustomed to concrete ideas, will point to his bales of merchandise; while religious leaders will point to the Bible and England's multiplicity of churches. "Machinery again!" answers Arnold. All these things, too, prove nothing as to England's greatness independently of the results for culture, for perfection, in the totality of the individual and national life, which are actually achieved by them. "Never did people believe anything more firmly than nine Englishmen out of ten at the present day believe that our greatness and welfare are proved by our being so very rich. Now the use of culture is that it helps us, by means of its spiritual standard of perfection, to regard wealth as but machinery, and not only to say as a matter of words that we regard wealth as machinery, but really to perceive and feel that it is so."

He allows that commerce and industrialism are necessary as a foundation of future material well-being, and to that extent are justifiable elements in the national life, but he laments that this is not a truth which needs to be emphasised in modern days, and, besides, they exact a terrible penalty. "The worst of these justifications is that they are generally addressed to the very people engaged, body and soul, in the movement in question; at all events, that they are always seized with the greatest avidity by these people, and taken by them as quite justifying their life; and that thus they

tend to harden them in their sins. Culture admits the necessity of the movement towards fortune-making and exaggerated industrialism, readily allows that the future may derive benefit from it, but insists, at the same time, that the passing generations of industrialists—forming, for the most part, the stout main body of Philistines—are sacrificed to it."

But religion,—at any rate religion in the abstract, religion conceived wholly without regard for the rivalries of sect and party,—that surely is a positive good; nay, is it not perfection itself? Yet even to this plea the answer again is—machinery! Tried by results, "the English reliance on our religious organisations and on their ideas of human perfection just as they stand is like our reliance on freedom, on muscular Christianity, on population, on coal, on wealth — mere belief in machinery, and unfruitful."

Culture, which is bent on seeing things as they are, and on bringing the human race to a more complete, more harmonious conception of life, is here likewise the true corrective. Religion at its best has only value in so far as it sets a man on the path to perfection and furnishes him with a continual forward impetus. Here Arnold's advice is—Put not your trust in feelings, for nothing is so deceptive. Even the inward peace and satisfaction which come when the more obvious defects of the animal part of human nature have been suppressed is only a relative gain, and must not be confused with that absolute inward peace and satisfaction

which conscious progress towards complete spiritual perfection can alone create. As for those whose conception of religion is expressed by "the Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant Religion" (the motto of the old "*Independent*" newspaper), Arnold tells them that, far from having attained to culture, they have not even entered into the spirit of religion itself, for all their vain repetitions and their protestations of high moral motive.

Culture, then, looks behind and beyond machinery —behind, because it knows that machinery of itself is inert, powerless, an empty show; beyond, because the springs of perfection lie in human life and character, and its realisation requires of these the transformation and the renewal.

From this standpoint, what judgment does culture pronounce upon the several classes which make up society and upon their respective claims and qualifications to exercise the powers and functions of the State? There are, broadly, three social groups, of which the central one to some extent overlaps its neighbours on both sides, though the delimitation is sufficiently definite for classification—the aristocracy, the middle class, and the working class, otherwise called by Arnold the Barbarians, the Philistines, and the Populace. We shall make their acquaintance more formally in a succeeding chapter, and Arnold's characterisation need not here detain us. He finds, in brief, that though these classes present widely divergent social traits, they

share certain intellectual defects in common, and these defects incapacitate every one of them from serving as an effectual ruling power. In particular they are all alike in this, that in the world of politics and affairs they live by mutual flattery. For, "Our whole scheme of government being representative, every one of our governors has all possible temptation, instead of setting up before the governed who elect him, and on whose favour he depends, a high standard of right reason, to accommodate himself as much as possible to their natural taste for the bathos: and even if he tries to go counter to it, to proceed in this with so much flattering and coaxing, that they shall not suspect their ignorance and prejudice to be anything very unlike right reason, or their natural taste for the bathos to differ much from a relish for the sublime." [1]

But is the case, then, so desperate? If neither of the three classes is qualified on its own merits to control national policy and government, is there no alternative to a slow progression in anarchy? Arnold answers—Sink the idea of class altogether, try to break down the differences which create classes, and in the transformed will of the totality seek a source and centre of political power saner, surer, and safer than any which has held the field heretofore. "What," he asks, "if we tried to rise above the idea of class to the idea of the whole community, *the State*, and to find our centre of light and authority there?" That implies, however, self-

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, chapter iii.

effacement all round—each class and every one of its members must cease to affirm the natural self, with its class prejudices, its unreasoning likes and dislikes, its partial and interested view of things, and in the cultivation of common interests and a common life assert for the individual and for society that true liberty which exists only in the sphere of harmony and law. To the State, then, Arnold comes as "the organ of our collective best self, of our national right reason." For how true is it, he says, that "By our everyday selves we are separate, personal, at war; we are only safe from one another's tyranny when no one has any power; and this safety, in its turn, cannot save us from anarchy. And when, therefore, anarchy presents itself as a danger to us, we know not where to turn. But by our *best self* we are united, impersonal, at harmony. We are in no peril from giving authority to this because it is the truest friend we all of us can have; and when anarchy is a danger to us, to this authority we may turn with sure trust. Well, and this is the very self which culture, or the study of perfection, seeks to develop in us, at the expense of our old untransformed self, taking pleasure in doing what it likes or is used to do, and exposing us to the risk of clashing with every one else who is doing the same! So that our poor culture, which is flouted as so unpractical, leads us to the very ideas capable of meeting the great want of our present embarrassed times! We want an authority, and we find nothing but jealous classes, checks, and a

deadlock; culture suggests the idea of *the State*. We find no basis for a firm State-power in our ordinary selves; culture suggests one to us in our *best* self."

Such an argument as this is the best answer to those who would represent Arnold as in a peculiar way the advocate and spokesman of class. He replies in effect: That cannot be true. For culture, which I commend, knows no class; in its essence and end it is of no class; what it seeks to do, what its realisation will inevitably do, is to break down class divisions. For class divisions rest on prejudices, and prejudices arise in want of knowledge. Not wealth, not rank alone, is the real divider. The ignorant millionaire and the ignorant labourer are equals in all that makes the true content of life—each a "finished and finite clod, untroubled by a spark." Though they enter at different doors and sit in different places, both are unseasonable guests at the feast of life: the one like the other is without the wedding garment. It is culture which marks the essential difference between man and man; its absence keeping them apart in classes just as surely as its presence is bound to reconcile them. "What unites and separates people now is *Geist*," says wisely and well the oracular Arminius of *Friendship's Garland*,—so "Geist" is the true conciliator and conserver. Hence the friend of culture is of necessity the friend of true equality. It is equality gained not by a material levelling down but by a moral raising up. Here, however, let me quote Arnold's own words:

"It [culture] does not try to reach down to the level of the inferior classes; it does not try to win them for this or that sect of its own, with ready-made judgments and watchwords. It seeks to do away with classes; to make the best that has been thought and known in the world current everywhere; to make all men live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light, where they may use ideas, as it uses them itself, freely—nourished, and not bound by them. This is the *social idea*: and the men of culture are the true apostles of equality. The great men of culture are those who have had a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, for carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time; who have laboured to divest knowledge of all that was harsh, uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive; to humanise it, to make it efficient outside the clique of the cultivated and learned, yet still remaining the *best* knowledge and thought of the true, and a true source, therefore, of sweetness and light."[1]

In thus prescribing, as culture's absolute rule for social harmony, the subordination of the individual to the collective will and interest and welfare, Arnold knew what a great demand he was making upon the human nature of his countrymen, and how entirely this demand was at variance with "our strong individualism, our hatred of all limits to the unrestrained swing of the individual's personality, our maxim of 'every man for

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, chapter i.

himself.'" Whereas "Culture indefatigably tries, not to make what each raw person may like the rule by which he fashions himself, but to draw ever nearer to a sense of what is indeed beautiful, graceful, and becoming, and to get the raw person to like that." But the sacrifice of self would have to be made if confusion was to be stayed, and for himself confusion had gone far enough. For the honesty, and manfulness, and tenacity with which English people followed the best light they had, he had unbounded admiration; he only lamented that they did not take sufficient heed that their light was not darkness.[1] Looking around him, he saw everywhere the crude, untutored self looming large and ugly, everywhere intelligence and right reason overborne by eccentricity, extravagant individualism, and civilised lawlessness. And the result of this indiscriminate conflict between raw individuality and right reason was to encourage the idea that no such thing as right reason existed, and that the best wisdom obtainable was a fortuitous amalgam of the undisciplined judgments, the senseless prejudices, and the unamiable egoisms of the contending classes. While, to confirm the nation in its toleration of and preference for confusion, there had sprung up, from the

[1] "What are the essential characteristics of the spirit of our nation? Not, certainly, an open and clear mind, not a quick and flexible intelligence. . . . If we are judged favourably and positively, not invidiously and negatively, our chief characteristics are, no doubt, these—energy and honesty."—Essay on *The Literary Influence of Academies.*

seed-bed of a political fatalism, commonly called trust in Providence, the belief that only let the nation bungle long enough and it would emerge from the worst of its perplexities safe and sound. In a word, the principle of our social and political system Arnold judged to be anarchy tempered by blind faith in the inherent capacity of wrong means to produce right ends.

His oppressing sense of the fallacy and danger of England's life of irrationality is finely, if despondently, expressed in his poem *Heine's Grave*, wherein he laments:

> We, too, say that she now—
> Scarce comprehending the voice
> Of her greatest, golden-mouth'd sons
> Of a former age any more—
> Stupidly travels her round
> Of mechanic business, and lets
> Slow die out of her life
> Glory, and genius, and joy.
> So thou arraign'st her, her foe:
> So we arraign her, her sons.
> Yes, we arraign her! but she,
> The weary Titan, with deaf
> Ears, and labour-dimm'd eyes,
> Regarding neither to right
> Nor left, goes passively by,
> Staggering on to her goal;
> Bearing on shoulders immense,
> Atlanteän, the load
> Well-nigh not to be borne,
> Of the too vast orb of her fate.

One cure, one way of safety, he saw, and one only. It was to be found in culture, which would enable us "by

getting to know, whether through reading, observing, or thinking, the best that can at present be known in the world, to come as near as we can to the firm, intelligible law of things, and thus to get a basis for a less confused action and a more complete perfection than we have at present."

"From all sides," he writes, "the more we go into the matter, the currents seem to converge, and together to bear us along towards culture. If we look at the world outside us we find a disquieting absence of sure authority. We discover that only in right reason can we get a source of sure authority; and culture brings us towards right reason. If we look at our own inner world we find all manner of confusion arising out of the habits of unintelligent routine and one-sided growth, to which a too exclusive worship of fire, earnestness, and action has brought us. What we want is a fuller harmonious development of our humanity, a free play of thought upon our routine notions, spontaneity of consciousness, sweetness, and light; and these are just what culture generates and fosters." [1]

III

It would be easy to find fault with Arnold's argument for culture as mankind's all-sufficient rule and guide, if criticism of details and not attention to the kernel of truth it contains were the necessary thing. It is often said that he unduly emphasises the value of

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, chapter v.

the life of thought. It would be nearer the fact to say that while the value of this life is not and cannot be exaggerated, since from thought proceeds the incentive to all wholesome personal conduct and public policy, he fails to make just allowance for the life of action, its natural correlative, its necessary complement. Doubtless, his depreciation of the "strenuous" life was due in part to his own intense dislike—the result as much of instinct as of culture—of all energy which expressed itself in strife and turmoil. His ideal was a life of "toil unsever'd from tranquillity," of labour accomplishing noble ends by peaceful methods. "You will laugh," he writes (February 22, 1868) to his mother, "but fiery hatred and malice are what I detest, and would always allay or avoid if I could." True, he had in his day a share, and a fair share, in public controversy of many kinds, yet despite all contradiction of principle, that principle was no less real that he departed from it time after time — always conscious that the weapons of polemic, skilfully though he wielded them, were borrowed weapons which belonged not to his armoury. Hence he was unmoved by the reproach, so frequently levelled at him by the critics who lay in wait for his periodical incursions into controversy, that while assuming to be a sort of adviser in general to the universe upon its mode of life, while so vigorously and rigorously flagellating the social foibles and *bêtises* of his day, he resolutely refused to have part or lot in practical works of amelioration. The accusation is

true within limits. Though professing political Liberalism of a very definite though very eclectic order, Arnold did assuredly decline to fight shoulder to shoulder with reformers who would have welcomed him as a comrade heartily enough if only they could have been sure in which direction his shot would have been fired.

It was, however, his profound belief that the Liberalism of his day was making progress on wrong lines, was seeking salvation in directions where it would assuredly never be found. His radical objection to political warfare on both sides was that it was a warfare about unfruitful and unpromising matters of machinery. The air was full then as now of questions and problems; and Liberalism in particular possessed an unfailing specific for every ailment which afflicted the body politic; yet to Arnold it seemed that the remedies proposed were for the most part worse than the diseases they were intended to cure. Hence to expect him to co-operate with the politicians who inscribed Progress upon their pennons was like inviting a doctor to prescribe for his patient a medicine which he knew would prevent or at least retard recovery. It was just because he wished well to progress, which for him meant not the indiscriminate multiplication of political machinery, but advancement in culture, that his attitude towards the Liberalism of his day was that of a neutrality not even benevolent in disposition. He was a Liberal, indeed, but "a Liberal of the future

rather than of the present." The very purpose of his crusade against administrative anarchy was to convince his fellow-men that if more thought were given to the problems connected with the condition of society the solution of these problems would be attended by fewer and less insuperable difficulties, and that to this extent culture would prove itself the best of solvents, inasmuch as it would remove from the path of the practical reformer the obstacles, arising from lack of knowledge and the neglect of reason, which impeded effectual advance. But politicians and parties of all shades of opinion had with one consent refused to acknowledge that a reason for things existed, and the result was seen in social confusion, inept reforms, schemes of so-called amelioration which would only make the bad worse, the discredit of parties, the paralysis of most reformative endeavour, and wholesale pessimism and *ennui* due to the wreck of efforts and schemes which from the first were foreordained to failure.

"The man of culture is in politics one of the poorest mortals alive," had said one of his critics. He did not deny the amiable imputation; in truth he claimed for the man of culture no place at all in practical politics. Far indeed from his mind was the idea, commonly attributed to him, of desiring the establishment of a sort of National Urgency Committee composed exclusively of men of culture. Convinced though he was that the men of no culture had worked mischief enough, he thought that "the speech most proper at

present for a man of culture to make to a body of his fellow-countrymen who get him into a committee-room is Socrates's 'Know thyself!' and this is not a speech to be made by men waiting to be entrusted with power." In the essay on *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time* he had already written (1865): "The rush and roar of practical life will always have a dizzying and attracting effect upon the most collected spectator, and tend to draw him into its vortex; most of all will this be the case where that life is so powerful as it is in England. But it is only by remaining collected and refusing to lend himself to the point of view of the practical man, that the critic can do the practical man any service; and it is only by the greatest sincerity in pursuing his own course, and by at last convincing even the practical man of his sincerity, that he can escape misunderstandings which perpetually threaten him." And again: "Let us think of quietly enlarging our stock of true and fresh ideas, and not, as soon as we get an idea or half an idea, be running out with it into the street, and trying to make it rule there. Our ideas will, in the end, shape the world all the better for maturing a little." The most obvious wisdom, the most convincing common sense—so obvious, so convincing, that the world will not take it in!

Thus not for the believer in the urgency of culture and the efficacy of its transforming influence for society were, on the one hand, despondency and violence, nor yet, on the other hand, the attractions, such as they

were, of public life and direct political action. His function and his mission must be that of the mentor, the director, the inspirer. He must act on the actors, furnishing them with new motives, new standpoints, new outlooks, with clearer thought and more rational ideas. That, however, is reform by culture, so that "through culture seems to lie our way not only to perfection but even to safety."

IV

And who with a candid eye, with a mind open to the facts of experience, will deny the force of such reasoning, in these days of all others, when politics tends less and less to be the noble science of the State's welfare and to become instead the ignoble exploitation of public interests for party and often for personal ends? An atmosphere of mutual jealousy and recrimination might seem to be essential to party politics. Since party government can only thrive so long as a nation allows itself to be divided into rival and antagonistic camps, to keep it so divided is the first business of the political manager, who can only thus perpetuate his rule. Hence the life of the individual politician is a life of perpetual motion and emotion. If he is not forming a society he is joining one, until no conceivable shade of political opinion, no conceivable object of political effort, lacks its full complement of propagandist machinery; while the recognised methods of party warfare are pelting one another

with catchwords, inflaming the masses by the passionate recital of their grievances, and expounding your own or pulverising your neighbour's "programme." In unscrupulous hands this species of politics becomes inevitably a hopelessly discreditable occupation, yet where the public consciousness and the sense of State interest lack vigour the party system, even in hands which are held to be very far above suspicion, opens the way to endless procedure of a kind which no ingenuity can reconcile with the true welfare of the commonwealth.

The healthy tone of English political life has long been proverbial; it has, indeed, belonged to the nation's most valuable moral assets; yet the tendency to evade the old implicit obligations, whose very dignity consisted in the fact that they were a tradition and not a rigid law, to relax the old code of scrupulousness, to regard the honourable maxim, *Noblesse oblige*, as a picturesque survival, is a real danger of modern days. As the possession of office depends in the last resort upon the favour of the electors of least thought and lowest principle, the nondescripts who are everything by turn and nothing long, and who turn the scale in the majority of constituencies, political astuteness is held to consist in the skill and success with which a candidate or his leader manages to capture this irrational and largely illiterate residuum; and when one side has duly floated its line the other promptly endeavours to discover a more tempting bait.

Hence the continual offer of measures which are proved on examination to be impossible of realisation, a result creating disappointment in the electors who have been deluded, and a resolution on their part to be even with their deceivers by throwing their influence next time in the opposite scale, if only they can persuade the rival party to promise what their opponents withheld. One of the most alarming signs of the time is the pernicious and growing tendency to bribe not merely clearly defined classes of the population, but even such branches of the civil service as are believed to wield any considerable political influence. Still more sinister is the corruption which is practised by unprincipled politicians in the so-called Service constituencies, the suffrages of whose residents are now openly solicited, not on large public issues, but on the strength of consideration shown or not shown by the Government in power for their special interests, and even of the direct promise of higher wages and pleasanter conditions of employment.

But, in truth, Arnold's depreciation of the life of irrational activity and still more his warning against egoism and self-assertion have application not only for one phase of national life, but for every phase. In the industrial world it is no different. Neither on the side of capital nor of labour is there any longer a conscious recognition of the fact that the interests about which they contend are not their own sectional interests, but in reality the interests of the entire community. What

we see is each side fighting for its own hand. While capital resorts to its combinations, its "trusts" and "rings," labour similarly strives for its rights equally regardless of any rights which may be possessed against it by society. It is not a question of what either capital or labour should in social justice have or do, but of what they may jointly or individually wrest from the community if they set in operation the machinery of organisation, monopoly, and pressure, direct and indirect, which lax laws and public impotence place at their command.

And, coming to religion, what is the huge system of sectarianism both without and within the Church but a manifestation on the grand scale of an exaggerated individualism which subordinates universal interests to individual wish, whim, and eccentricity, and pushes more and more into the background the ideal of disciplined unity of thought and action? Within the Establishment men risk the peace of the Church and the repute of religion, now by rebellion against lawful authority, now by frivolous disputation about unessential matters of doctrine and ritual. "But we are in the right," say the Ritualists. Yet even if they were a thousand times more in the right than they are, the entire spirit of their agitation is anarchical, and anarchy is the antithesis of culture. The cure for Ritualism is not force, and not necessarily exclusion,—it is far simpler; it is the voluntary effacement of the ordinary self, and it is clear that the Nonconformists

without the Church will never be reconciled either to absorption or amalgamation until the Nonconformists within the Church set an example of such effacement. Outside the Establishment the principle of private judgment reigns still more supreme. The thirty-three sects of yesterday become thirty-four to-day, for some one has invented a new doctrine or unearthed an old one, and a church must be founded in which to enshrine it. One week a religious fanatic proclaims to a frenzied congregation that he is the "Messiah" come again to earth; the next week a new prophet appears on the scene, and shatters the nerves of the credulous and the weak-minded by predictions of imminent terrestrial doom. Why not? This is a free country, private judgment and doing as he likes are every man's inalienable rights, and what are rights good for if they be not asserted? So flourish fanaticism and flourish prophecy, though religion be dishonoured, and the national name be discredited in the eyes of other cultivated nations which, less convinced than we of the blessedness of unrestricted liberty, crown their fools with caps and bells and put their harmless lunatics under salutary restraint.

That in art and letters the same picture is offered of unwholesome eccentricity and unbridled licence may be learned from the last opened gallery and the last published novel. "Art for art's sake" is the device of modern realism, and the plea is held to justify everything that is crude, grotesque, and abnormal. Fiction,

too, goes to nature for its studies, but nature in its wildest and most lawless moods, and the very lubricity [1] against which Arnold so earnestly declaimed thirty years ago as a fatal degradation of current French literature, and believed to be impossible elsewhere, has become fashionable in the classic land of prudery. Of old the hog had his stye and was kept there; to-day he may ramble through the library, and even in my lady's boudoir. It is an evil too flagrant, perchance, to last, but meantime it exists, and its existence is a symptom.

And what is seen in the nation's open life goes on behind closed doors, where the full flood of public light never falls—a steady movement making against culture, against refinement of life and thought, against idealism, a movement not everywhere equally gross, yet everywhere equally retarding. To-day the air is full of the cry and clamour of so-called modernity. That a thing be modern excuses everything — every vagary, every extravagance, every riot of the imagination, every eccentricity of action. The ancient ways are left, not because they are no longer passable, but because they are ancient; the ancient landmarks are removed,

[1] "Let us stand fast and say that her worship is against nature, human nature, and that it is ruin. For this is the test of its being against human nature, that for human societies it is ruin. . . . The Eternal has attached to certain moral causes the safety or the ruin of States, and the present popular literature of France is a sign that she has a most dangerous moral disease."—Essay on "Numbers," reprinted in *Discourses in America.*

not because they had ceased to guide us aright, but because they guided us in a way we did not wish to go, above all because they recalled the past, and that annoys and irritates us; so, too, the old habits, the old ideals, the old scheme of life, with its philosophy so sober and matter-of-fact yet so healthy, are done away with less than Jedwood justice.

Only now and then, when the consciousness of the fever-pace of life becomes for a fleeting moment vivid even to oppressiveness, do we stop and, with furtive look behind and dread at the heart as we scan the vague unknown, ask in panting accents, Whither?

And the natural allies of culture — how do they deport themselves in this spiritual Armageddon, by whose issue culture itself will vastly gain or immeasurably lose? The answer that must be given reveals more than anything else the tragedy of the outlook. For the spirit of materialism has won an entrance, has been welcomed with open arms, in the high places of intellectual illumination. Our universities have also been brought up to date, and now they create not only doctors of letters and theology, but doctors of commerce; and rectoral orations, uttered in academic *aulæ* which aforetime echoed to the praise of learning, are devoted to the apotheosis of trade and the discussion of the question whether this country or that shall "lead the world" in the export of manufactures. The gods, indulgent to Matthew Arnold in so many ways, spared him this incongruous spectacle. In the ancient

grammar schools of the land also technical instruction, clothed for decency's sake in the name of education (so much respect for ourselves and the past we retain), is being more and more enthroned in the place of humane letters, the discipline of thought superseded by the discipline of "getting on." For the fathers having "got on," the sons must get still more on; whatever else happens, this process must suffer no check. To slacken effort here, to abate concentration upon this supreme concern, would be to withdraw co-operation from a divinely ordained law of human progress; for is not moral excellence best measured by a man's flocks and herds, and though your Bible is emphatically a good book, is not your bank-book a better? And further, lest that peculiar glory of the industrial era, the "man who has risen," should suffer eclipse, education—which was never education at all, and was never intended to be—is starved, truncated, and finally wound up by the time the lad has reached the mature age of sixteen, so that when he has achieved the goal of his and his parents' ambition he may proudly boast that he, too, is a "self-made man." He does not know, and is then too old to care, that the self-made man is a half-made man; and the other half is the half which culture could have made had it been allowed; but culture would have entailed expenditure of effort and time — and time is money. And so it happens that when at last the business of "getting on" has been carried to its calculated end,

and the successful merchant begins in untimely age to moderate the passion for accumulation, it is too late to cultivate himself; every instinct of rational life, if not already destroyed outright, has been paralysed; and he comes to the end of life having entirely missed life's true purpose, which is simply to *live*.

What wonder if all such marks and movements of the present age should create in thoughtful minds the direst misgivings, and suggest the reflection that the life of modern days is a life far below the level fitted to an intelligent human society? What wonder that men and women, clear-sighted enough to distinguish truth from deception, are more and more urgently asking, What do we then get of worth and true dignity from our vaunted civilisation on the existing lines? Does civilisation really come as an emancipator, or as a tyrant? Are the defects of civilisation as we know it inherent, or may they be cast off? In the quiet moments when the mind, emerging from the mists of sophistry and the glamour of illusion, sees things as they really are, clear, undistorted, and in their true proportions, such inquirers ask themselves, with right, if indeed the old world was really so bad and treated us so ill that we must needs despise it; if the old-fashioned ideals had indeed become so impossible and *passés* that they must needs be rejected—in a word, whether the progress we are making is progress for good or for ill.

And who, impressed by considerations like these,

can doubt that the great needs of to-day are, on the one hand, self-cultivation, and on the other hand, and no less, self-suppression — a cultivation which gives fuller content, greater harmony and completeness to life, a suppression which curbs egoism and restrains eccentricity, which emphasises private judgment less and respect for authority more, which discourages the assertion of our precious individualities, most of which, after all, are poor things, far better hidden than seen, and so brings into prominence the collective view and the collective interest?

Here, then, Arnold comes with suggestive reasoning and fruitful thought. His advice alike to the private and the public man is: Get culture, and it will not only edify by the very possession of it, setting you on the path to perfection, but it will offer you a principle and rule of action applicable and operative in all the circumstances and situations of life. So that culture, after all, instead of being something selfish and uselessly recondite, is in reality the most social and the most humane thing in the world. It is, as we have seen, the true friend of equality, for where culture is most absent society is most hopelessly divided into classes. It is the foe of excess and immoderation of every kind. It causes the individual, of his own will and motion, to subordinate himself to the totality, and this is not the least of its benefits. Finally, it offers to the world of action a way of welcome release from its besetting difficulties. It is not over-eager to be adjust-

ing abuses and remoulding society according to the nostrum and shibboleth of this party or that. It seeks rather to defer action until it can be more clearly seen whether the reform proposed will really have the result expected, or will create a new order of conditions even more perplexing than that which now exists. Most mistakes in the past have been the result of want of thought, or of thought by the wrong people on the wrong lines.

CHAPTER III

HELLENISM AND HEBRAISM

THAN Matthew Arnold no man more ardently preached the duty of opening the mind to the free play of ideas as the first step to clear and independent thought, and no man justified the precept more completely in himself. You may differ from him upon many points of detail, and often upon fundamental principles, when he discusses either theology or politics, the drama or education, but it will always be with gratitude for his fresh, critical spirit, his unconventional handling of topics in themselves as old as the hills, his wealth of suggestion, his novel points of view. Always he illuminates even when he fails to exhaust a subject, or to carry you to his own conclusions. If he has a habit of riding a theory too hard, it is generally because the theory has so much strength and spirit in it as to tempt the rider to overdo his horsemanship; and, moreover, he carries himself so gallantly that, pity the steed as you may, you forget to blame the adept who is able to get so much out of him. His treatment of that favourite theme of his, Hellenism and Hebraism,

is an excellent illustration of this disposition unduly to force an argument in itself perfectly legitimate. Yet, after making all necessary reservations on points of application, his statement of the place which these spiritual disciplines have historically occupied in European civilisation is as precise as his plea for their harmonious union is irresistible.

Having convicted the middle classes of lack of culture, it was necessary to discover a reason why their habits had taken an unintellectual tendency, and the reason which satisfies him is that conscience has been cultivated at the expense of the intellect, conduct at the expense of thought. The discipline of thought he calls Hellenism, the discipline of conduct he calls Hebraism: to the latter discipline the middle classes, thanks to the stimulus derived from Puritanism, have exclusively devoted themselves, with the result that in all that affects the nurture and life of the intellect they have lamentably failed. Its immediate bearing apart, his study of these two rival tendencies, which have alternately dominated Western civilisation, is perhaps one of the solidest parts of his dissertation upon culture. The governing idea of Hellenism is spontaneity of consciousness. It lays stress upon reason, intelligence, and the æsthetic faculties. The cultivation of these is the end of life, and life reaches its truest balance and harmony when all are cultivated equally, none to the neglect of the rest. To the Greek the life of wisdom was the life of happiness, for the secret of virtue and happiness was to think

aright, and folly and vice were the result of ignorance —the sour fruit of the mind which has been suffered to fall out of cultivation. For him the whole art of life was contained in the one word "equipoise." That life was most perfect in which individuality was most equally and most naturally developed, and made to minister to the service of beauty. This is the truth of Hellenism, and Arnold thus applies it to his own people and his own day:

"The characteristic bent of Hellenism is to find the intelligible law of things, to see them in their true nature and as they really are. But many things are not seen in their true nature and as they really are unless they are seen as beautiful. Behaviour is not intelligible, does not account for itself to the mind and show the reason for its existing, unless it is beautiful. The same with discourse, the same with song, the same with worship, all of them modes in which man proves his activity and expresses himself. To think that when one produces in these what is mean, or vulgar, or hideous, one can be permitted to plead that one has that within which passes show; to suppose that the possession of what benefits and satisfies one part of our being can make allowable either discourse like Mr. Murphy's, or poetry like the hymns we all hear, or places of worship like the chapels we all see,—this it is abhorrent to the nature of Hellenism to concede." [1]

And yet, while he himself so freely imbibed the spirit

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, chapter v.

of Hellenism, and was never slow to acknowledge its grace and charm, Arnold did not overlook the fact that the Greek view of life, though balance and harmony were its master-words, lacked in truth both balance and harmony. It emphasised intellectual culture and it did well in so doing, but conduct it neglected. "The moral virtues are with Aristotle but the porch and access to the intellectual, and with these last is blessedness." "Joined," he says, "to all the gifts and graces which that admirable genius [of the Greeks] brought with it, there went, as a kind of fatal accompaniment, moral inadequacy. And if one asked why this was so, it seemed as if it could only be because the power of seriousness, of tenacious grasp upon grave and moral ideas, was wanting." In truth the flexible Greek mind here did not prove flexible enough, for it failed to grasp the importance of conduct. Hence it is that mankind's infinite debt to classical Greece is a debt for intellectual and artistic goods, but little for any contribution by her to religion and morals.[1]

[1] So Dr. Temple in his essay on *The Education of the World:* "To Greece was entrusted the cultivation of the reason and the taste. Her gift to mankind has been science and art. There was little in her temper of the spirit of reverence. Her morality and her religion did not spring from the conscience. Her gods were the creatures of imagination, not of spiritual need. Her highest idea was not holiness, as with the Hebrews, nor law as with the Romans, but beauty. . . . The highest possible cultivation of the individual, the most finished perfection of the natural faculties, was her dream. . . . To the Greeks we owe the corrective which conscience needs to

Here comes in Hebraism, yet in supplying the deficiency it falls itself into excess. For Hebraism considers conduct exclusively, culture not at all. Where the Greek emphasised spontaneity of consciousness the Hebrew emphasised strictness of conscience. Hence he hedged himself round by endless prescriptions, governing his whole life, anticipating the need of every contingency, regulating every action, every impulse, every desire, and leaving nothing to chance or freedom. Greek and Hebrew alike acknowledged binding laws of life, but while on the part of the Greek obedience was spontaneous, the outcome of the free play of the reason and judgment, on the part of the Hebrew it was mechanical, an obedience rendered not to an impulse of his nature but to a stern authority without him. At the same time, though thus viewing life from different standpoints, Hellenism and Hebraism had one great interest in common; the one sought man's perfection, the other his salvation, yet in essence the end was the same, however contrary the methods of reaching it. The best spirit of Hellenism, indeed, is expressed in many an utterance of the Old Testament, commending understanding as a well-spring of life, and obedience to the commandments as the path of supreme wisdom and

borrow from nature. Conscience, startled at the awful truths which she has to reveal, too often threatens to withdraw the soul into gloomy and perverse asceticism: then is needed the beauty which Greece taught us to admire, to show us another aspect of the Divine attributes."—*Essays and Reviews*, 1860.

safety; but because Hellenism failed to keep at the level of its own highest ideals, it succumbed: human perfection, at that stage of the world's history, at any rate, was unattainable by its discipline.

"Apparently it was the Hellenic conception of human nature which was unsound, for the world could not live by it . . . it was unsound at that particular moment of man's development, it was premature . . . . The indispensable basis of conduct and self-control, the platform upon which alone the perfection aimed at by Greece can come into bloom, was not to be reached by our race so easily; centuries of probation and discipline were needed to bring us to it." [1]

Hence it was that Hebraism, in the form given to it by Christianity, came to assert an almost absolute domination over the thought and life of Europe, transforming the Greek conception of life, and substituting self-negation for spontaneous self-development.

"Through age after age and generation after generation our race, or all that part of our race which was most living and progressive, was *baptised into a death;* and endeavoured, by suffering in the flesh, to cease from sin. Of this endeavour the animating labours and afflictions of early Christianity, the touching asceticism of mediæval Christianity, are the great historical manifestations. Literary monuments of it, each in its own way incomparable, remain in the Epistles of St. Paul, in St. Augustine's *Confessions*, and in the two

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, chapter iv.

original and simplest books [the first two] of the *Imitation*." [1]

So complete was the conquest that centuries passed before Hellenism could again lift up its head. A revival came at last in the Renaissance, when Western civilisation finally broke with antiquity and the modern era opened. The old ardour of learning returned; intellectual activity burst forth on every side, and found expression in epoch-making speculations in philosophy and revolutionary discoveries in science. Mediæval ideas and institutions both in politics and theology received a rude shock, as the human spirit asserted its new-found freedom and the intellect dared to force entrance into provinces of inquiry which heretofore had been forbidden to it. But the Hellenism of the Renaissance fell into the same error as the Hellenism of pagan times, in that it emphasised knowledge at the expense of conduct. The moral side of human nature, with which Hebraism had so long and so exclusively concerned itself, became neglected. The defect was fatal, and it paved the way for inevitable reaction. England, the last country to respond to the new emancipatory movement in culture, was the first to draw back in distrust and misgiving. Soon "shades of the prison-house closed on the growing" soul: that prison-house was Puritanism.

"Puritanism," writes Arnold, "which has been so great a power in the English nation, and in the

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, chapter iv.

strongest part of the English nation, was originally the reaction in the seventeenth century of the conscience and moral sense of our race, against the moral indifference and lax rule of conduct which in the sixteenth century came in with the Renaissance. It was a reaction of Hebraism against Hellenism. . . . Undoubtedly it checked and changed amongst us that movement of the Renaissance which we see producing in the reign of Elizabeth such wonderful results. Undoubtedly it stopped the prominent rule and direct development of that order of ideas which we call by the name of Hellenism and gave the first rank to a different order of ideas." [1]

There was, however, this difference between the Hebraism which in the form of Christianity overcame Hellenism in the first encounter and the Hebraism which in the form of Puritanism overcame it in the second encounter in England. Primitive Christianity was a triumphant world-force; it not only conquered, but it took the place, and henceforth discharged the function, of its vanquished spiritual antagonist. The triumph of Puritanism was partial and local: Puritanism never became the central current of the world's progress; it was "a side stream crossing the central stream and checking it." Hellenism had been a movement towards the light, towards the broadening of human nature and life, a movement deriving impetus from the free use of reason, art, science, and all the forces of

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, chapter iv.

culture. Puritanism, during the period of its political ascendency in England, strove, and with signal success, to stem this movement, and to drive human nature back into the narrowest channels of Hebraism. The Puritans pleaded earnestly for liberty of opinion so long as the heel of oppression rested upon them, but no sooner had they gained the upper hand than it became apparent that it was only liberty for themselves they desired; and they became intolerant and vindictive in turn. The "Commonwealth of the Saints," had it been established, would have meant the relentless suppression of the sinners, and all were sinners who did not walk in the way of Calvinism. All the healthy human impulses which the Renaissance had quickened were repelled and overborne by the invincible bigotry of distorted minds, which saw nothing in man except a soul to be saved or damned, and deemed nothing worthy of thought except the slavish dogmas of fanatical sectarianism. Under the pretence of concern for godliness Puritanism repressed every play of free human consciousness, every impulse to natural development and a healthy "joy of life," every expression of that "sweetness and light" which is the essence of Hellenism.[1] Alike in art, letters, and the drama its

[1] How the exceptional spirit ever emerges from the level of its surroundings is illustrated by the case of Milton. Note the passage in *An Apology for Smectymnuus*—a tract whose violence must be judged along with the odious personal aspersions which it disproves—wherein Milton pleads for diversity of character even in religious matters: "no man being forced

chilling, killing influence was felt. It was a Puritan Parliament which ordered that all such paintings in the priceless royal collections at Whitehall and York House as contained any representation of the Second Person of the Trinity should be burned as superstitious, and those " without any superstition " should be sold ! A Puritan Parliament banned the theatre, and the sober middle classes applauded the act and bound themselves by a self-denying ordinance not again to countenance an institution so worldly. From this short-sighted act of renunciation England has suffered intellectual loss ever since. On this subject Arnold writes :

" We know how the Elizabethan theatre had its cause in an ardent zest for life and living, a bold and large curiosity, a desire for a fuller, richer existence, pervading the nation at large, as they pervaded other nations, after the long mediæval time of obstruction and restraint. But we know, too, how the great middle class of this nation, alarmed at grave symptoms which showed themselves in the new movement, drew back ; made choice for its spirit to live at one point, instead of living, or trying to live, at many ; entered the prison of Puritanism, and had the key turned upon its spirit

wholly to dissolve that groundwork of nature which God created in him, the sanguine to empty out all his sociable liveliness, the choleric to expel quite the unsinning predominance of his anger ; but that each radical humour and passion, wrought upon and corrected as it ought, might be made the proper mould and foundation of every man's peculiar gifts and virtues."

there for two hundred years. Our middle class forsook the theatre. The English theatre reflected no more the aspiration of a great community for a fuller and richer sense of human existence." [1]

Nor will he allow that Puritanism has, on the political side, been the unconditional blessing which its apologists claim. Political liberty is, indeed, one result of the "long travail which England has passed through between the times of the Renaissance and our own," but can the Puritan claim exclusive credit? He answers:

"In the first place, is it certain that the England of to-day is the best imaginable and possible result from the elements with which we started at the Renaissance? Because, if not, then by some other shaping of events, and without the Puritan triumph, we might conceivably have stood even yet better than we stand now. In the second place, is it certain that of the good which we admittedly have in the England of to-day — the seriousness and the political liberty—the Puritans and the Puritan triumph are the authors? The assumption that they are so is plausible — it is current. . . . But is the assumption sound? When one considers the strength, the boldness, the self-assertion, the instincts of resistance and independence in the English nature, it is surely hazardous to affirm that only by the particular means of the Puritan struggle and the Puritan triumph could we have become free in our persons and

[1] Essay on *The French Play in London*.

property. When we consider the character shown, the signal given, in the thinking of Thomas More and Shakespeare, of Bacon and Harvey, how shall we say that only at the price of Puritanism could England have had free thought?" [1]

Turning to the later development of the Puritan spirit, after the severest rigour of its *régime* had become slackened, Arnold, with his ready perception of the penury of middle-class ideals, scathingly criticises the unholy alliance between God and Mammon which has nowhere succeeded so long or so well as in Puritan England. "How generally, with how many of us," he says, "are the main concerns of life limited to these two: the concern for making money, and the concern for saving our souls! And how entirely does the narrow and mechanical conception of our secular business proceed from a narrow and mechanical conception of our religious business! What havoc do the united conceptions make of our lives! It is because the second of these two master-concerns presents to us the one thing needful in so fixed, narrow, and mechanical a way that so ignoble a fellow master-concern to it as the first-named becomes possible; and, having been once admitted, takes the same rigid and absolute character as the other." He grants that the influence of Puritanism in elevating the standard of personal and national conduct has been immense [2]; yet he contends,

[1] Essay on "Falkland," in *Mixed Essays*.

[2] In one of his American addresses, that on "Numbers," Arnold says: "You have had, as we in England have also

on the other hand, that its influence upon the shaping of life and the ideals of life has been immeasurably retarding: "They did not know, good and earnest people as they were, that to the building up of human life there belong all those other powers also—the power of intellect and knowledge, the power of beauty, the power of social life and manners. And something, by what they became, they gained, and the whole nation with them; they deepened and fixed for this nation the sense of conduct. But they created a type of life and manners, of which they themselves indeed are slow to recognise the faults, but which is fatally condemned by its hideousness, its immense *ennui*, and against which the instinct of self-preservation in humanity rebels." [1]

But this exclusive regard for conscience and conduct has, besides narrowing and distorting life, had the effect of discrediting reason and its sanctions, thus producing a reign of confusion in society, which has lost the instinct for harmony, order, authority. Why is right reason not valued? Because Puritanism has

had, but more entirely than we and more exclusively, the Puritan discipline. Certainly I am not blind to the faults of that discipline. Certainly I do not wish it to remain in possession of the field for ever, or too long. But as a stage and a discipline, and as a means for enabling that poor inattentive and immoral creature, man, to love and appropriate and make part of his being divine ideas, on which he could not otherwise have laid or kept hold, the discipline of Puritanism has been invaluable; and the more I read history, the more I see of mankind, the more I recognise its value."

[1] Essay on "Equality," in *Mixed Essays*.

taught people to follow conscience blindly upon any given set of circumstances without asking why and wherefore. Religion being interpreted as containing an all-sufficient guide for action, it was natural to go a step further and assume that religion furnished an all-sufficient law of thought as well, and that the man who had religion had the only thing needful.[1] But Puritanism fails because, vast as is the importance of religion, it does not exhaust life, is not even commensurate with life. The Puritan of modern days, like the Puritan of old, is ready with his text: "Fear God and do His commandments, for that is the whole duty of man." But culture says the same thing, only culture gives to life, and therefore to the laws which condition perfection of life, a range far wider than Puritanism either recognises or suspects.[2] "Those who offer us the Puritan type of life (I quote Arnold) offer us a religion not true, the claims of intellect and knowledge not satisfied, the claims of beauty not satisfied, the claims of manners not satisfied. In its strong sense

[1] "I often reply when our sectarians are praised for following conscience," he told his American hearers in the lecture on Emerson, "'Our people are very good in following their conscience: where they are not so good is in ascertaining whether their conscience tells them right.'"

[2] "There is a Greek ideal of self-development which the Platonic and Christian ideal of self-government blends with but does not supersede. It may be better to be a John Knox than an Alcibiades, but it is better to be a Pericles than either; nor would a Pericles, if we had one in these days, be without anything good which belonged to John Knox."—J. S. Mill, *Liberty*, chapter on "The Elements of Well-Being."

for conduct that life touches truth; but its other imperfections hinder it from employing even this sense aright. The type mastered our nation for a time. Then came the reaction. The nation said: 'This type, at any rate, is amiss; we are not going to be all like *that!*' The type retired into our middle class, and fortified itself there. It seeks to endure, to emerge, to deny its own imperfections, to impose itself again;—impossible! If we continue to live, we must outgrow it. The very type in which it is rooted, our middle class, will have to acknowledge the type's inadequacy, will have to acknowledge the hideousness, the immense *ennui* of the life which this type has created, will have to transform itself thoroughly." [1]

[1] In a letter written March 25, 1881, Arnold speaks more freely upon the advantages and also the dangers of the modern reaction against Puritanism: "Man feels himself to be a more various and richly endowed animal than the old religious theory of human life allowed, and he is endeavouring to give satisfaction to the long suppressed and still imperfectly understood instincts of this varied nature. I think this revolution is happening everywhere: it is certainly happening in England, where the sombreness and narrowness of the religious world, and the rigid hold it long had upon us, have done so much to provoke it. I think it is, like all inevitable revolutions, a salutary one, but it greatly requires watching and guiding. The growing desire, throughout the community, for amusement and pleasure; the wonderful relaxation, in the middle class, of the old strictness as to theatres, dancing, and such things, are features which alarm many people; but they have their good side. They belong to this revolution of which I speak. The awakening demand for beauty, a demand so little made in this country for the last century or more, is another sign of the revolution, and a clearly favourable sign of it.

Between these two movements, Hellenism and Hebraism, Arnold seeks to effect reconciliation. They are not to be regarded as antinomies, each excluding the other; they are rather complementary, both together being needed to perfection. The modern world takes Hellenism, as the system which succumbed, too lightly; and Hebraism, as the triumphant system, it magnifies. "And yet the lesson must perforce be learned that the human spirit is wider than the most precious of the forces which bear it onward, and that to the whole development of man Hebraism itself is, like Hellenism, but a contribution." Again: "Hebraism and Hellenism are, neither of them, the *law* of human development, as their admirers are prone to make them; they are, each of them, *contributions* to human development,—august contributions, invaluable contributions; and each showing itself to us more august, more invaluable, more preponderant over the other, according to the moment in which we take them, and the relation in which we stand to them."

As to the past he would cry quits: Hellenism and Hebraism have each had their day of domination and decline: henceforth let them reign side by side in

Religious disputes have for so long a time touched the innermost fibre of our nation's being that they still attract great attention, and create passions and parties; but certainly they have not the significance which they once had. The moral is that whoever treats religion, religious discussions, questions of churches and sects, as absorbing, is not in vital sympathy with the movement of men's minds at present."

friendly empire over the human mind. He is willing to allow that "Puritanism was perhaps necessary to develop the moral fibre of the English race, Nonconformity to break the yoke of ecclesiastical domination over men's minds, and to prepare the way for freedom of thought in the distant future; still, culture points out that the harmonious perfection of generations of Puritans and Nonconformists has been, in consequence, sacrificed." The duty of the future, however, clearly is to restore the true "spiritual balance" and to preserve it. Every lover of culture must long for the day when "man's two great natural forces, Hebraism and Hellenism, will no longer be dissociated and rival, but will be a joint force of right thinking and strong doing to carry him on towards perfection." He even dares to hope that his own nation, which has shown such marked attachment to Hebraism, will as a result of its "painful schooling in self-conquest" and of its faculty for "dealing honestly with itself and walking steadfastly according to the best light it knows," walk by the true light of reason and beauty with no less honesty, staunchness, and zeal. And, "now and for us it is a time to Hellenise, and to praise knowing, for we have Hebraised too much and have over-valued doing."

Nor need the Puritan be in any fear that under the twin rule of Hellenism and Hebraism morality will fare ill. Between culture and conduct there is no incompatibility, and to divorce them is fatal. "Culture without character is, no doubt, something frivolous, vain

and weak; but character without culture is, on the other hand, something raw, blind, and dangerous." Safety is found only in a just combination of the two:— "Hebraism strikes too exclusively upon one string in us; Hellenism does not address itself with serious energy enough to morals and righteousness. For our totality, for our general perfection, we need to unite the two; now the two are easily at variance. In their lower forms they are irreconcilably at variance; only when each of them is at its best, is their harmony possible. Hebraism at its best is beauty and charm; Hellenism at its best is also beauty and charm. As such they can unite; as anything short of this, each of them, they are at discord, and their separation must continue. The flower of Hellenism is a kind of amiable grace and artless, winning good nature, born out of the perfection of lucidity, simplicity, and natural truth; the flower of Christianity is grace and peace by the annulment of our ordinary self through the mildness and sweet reasonableness of Christ. Both are eminently *humane*, and for complete human perfection both are required; the second being the perfection of that side in us which is moral and acts, the first of that side in us which is intelligential and perceives and knows."

Profoundly sensible though he was of the strong hold which the Puritan conception of life had asserted upon the English nation, and pre-eminently upon the middle classes, and strong even to vehemence as was his dislike of its narrowness, harshness, and sterility, Arnold

yet believed that under the solvent influence of the modern spirit even this inveterate obstacle to culture would in the end be overcome. And if he had no great sympathy with the Puritan element in the national life, and spent no small part of his controversial energy in combating it, he yet admired its vigour and virility. "The Puritan middle class, with all its faults," he writes, "is still the best stuff in this nation. Some have hated and persecuted it, many have flattered and derided it—flattered it that, while they deride it, they may use it; I have believed in it. It is the best stuff in this nation, and in its success is our best hope for the future. But to succeed it must be transformed." Signs of transformation he saw in a reviving taste for the theatre, in a furtive groping after knowledge, in a keener perception of the beautiful, in a greater cultivation of manners and the arts of society. The overthrow of Hebraism, however, would not be a victory for Hellenism but a victory for culture.

CHAPTER IV

THE THREE ESTATES

MEETING Matthew Arnold on one occasion at dinner, Lord Beaconsfield complimented him upon his felicity in phrase-making. Coming from a consummate master of an art in which, to do him justice, he also strove to excel, Arnold nursed the compliment as one of the most flattering which fell to his lot. It was the time which saw in vogue memorable collocations like "sweetness and light" (for which Arnold went, of course, to Swift), "conduct three-fourths of life," "Hebraism and Hellenism," and, above all, "Barbarian and Philistine." This was the happiest of designations to apply to the aristocracy and the middle class, for it told everything, and that in a manner at once epigrammatic and arresting. The words leaped at once into currency and popularity. Writing in one of those delightfully frank domestic letters of his, of an evening spent in congenial company just after the article introducing them to the British public appeared in *Cornhill*, he says: "I should think I heard the word Philistine used at least a hundred

times during dinner, and Barbarians very often." Amiable in all relationships, Arnold was in nothing so amiable as in the unaffected literary vanity which sat so gracefully upon him. More than that, both Barbarian and Philistine took more than kindly to the gibe, the former because it was administered with the most utter urbanity and absence of malice,[1] the latter probably because he detected in it a subtle compliment.

In one of his essays Arnold refers to the imperviousness of the English mind to foreign ideas, and its stolid indifference to current foreign literature, and laments it as one of the most unfortunate marks of insularity. If anything had been wanting to complete the indictment of Philistinism of this kind, the crowning evidence was surely afforded by the *naïveté* with which most of the readers and many of the critics of *Culture and Anarchy* promptly concluded that the word was one which Arnold had coined out of his own head. Barbarian was his own idea,— Philistine was not his at all, not even in his special application of it. He refers, indeed, to Heine's use of the word. Nor was it Heine's. In its literary significance "Philistine" is a word with a past, with a history both long and distinguished. It

[1] "I think Barbarian will stick," he writes in a letter of February 5, 1868, "but as a very charming Barbarianess . . . expresses a great desire to make my acquaintance I dare say the race will bear no malice. In fact, the one arm they feel and respect is irony, as I have often said; whereas the Puritan middle class, at whom I have launched so much, are partly too good, partly too gross, to feel it. I shall tell upon them, however, somehow before I have done."

comes from Germany, and in the fertile brain of her academic youth it had its origin—how many centuries ago? By the word "Philistine" the student naturally denoted — and denotes — all who were not numbered among the children of light. If you are not a student, and so one of the favoured people, an Israelite indeed, what else can you be but a Philistine?— it is the only other alternative. Applied thus generically, as who should say Jew and Gentile, the word was intended in a special manner to describe the characteristics of the humdrum civilian, lost in narrowness and prejudice, hating originality, obtuse in intelligence, smug and contented, and well provided with this world's goods —in short everything that the children of light are not. "When the student has no money he borrows from the Philistine." "Money have the Philistines, but their hearts are cold as ice." So it is written in two well-known students' songs, and the same sentiment, variously expressed, is found in many another genial *Kommerslied* dating from a period far anterior to either Heine or Goethe, who also hits off the characteristic laches of the Philistine both in prose and verse. That between the student world and the Philistine *Bürgerthum* no love should be lost was in the nature of things, for Scripture itself gave warrant for the merciless harrying of the enemy. Hence in the halcyon days of German student life, when every university was still bathed in the after-glow of mediæval romance, perpetual war raged between gown and town, and this

feud between poetic Academicus and prosaic Bürger had a distinctly biblical flavour. A student in his first term was then, as now, a *Fuchs* (Fox). When the second term came round he became a *Brandfuchs*—and in this wise: the hair behind his ears was singed with a lighted spell, and, that archaic rite performed, he was, metaphorically speaking, let loose with implicit sanction to lay waste the vineyards and gardens of the Philistines. A Jena legend of the end of the seventeenth century relates how a clergyman who was called on to preach at the burial service of a student of that quaint town, who had been done to death in a town-and-gown encounter, took as his text "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson."

In the sense in which the word had enjoyed immemorial currency amongst Heine's countrymen, and in which Heine himself had used it in his campaign of satire,— Milton comes near to giving it the same usage, —as roughly connoting the narrow-minded, unintelligent, and materialistic part of the middle class, Arnold adopted the term Philistine, and with his fondness for making the most of a good thing when he found it, he turned the convenient term to excellent purpose in all his later literary writings. "The people who believe most that our greatness and welfare are proved by our being rich, and who most give their lives and thoughts to becoming rich," he writes in *Culture and Anarchy*, "are just the very people whom we call Philistines."

Barbarian and Philistine were, however, but two

portions of a tripartite division of English society: the third was the Populace. We need no longer dispute over the exactness of Arnold's classification. Exactness was not claimed for it. Given, however, a broad application, and making all allowance for the many cases in which Barbarian, Philistine, and Plebeian unclass themselves by rising superior to the influences of their surroundings and standing forth, as it were, in active protest against the types with which they are socially to be identified, and neither his classification nor the dominant characteristics which he predicates of each of the three divisions will be found to go far astray.

The Philistine, as we have seen, explains himself: the very word gives the notion of "something particularly stiff-necked and perverse in the resistance to light and its children, and therein it specially suits our middle class." But why Barbarian? One may thus epitomise the difference: The middle class lacks sweetness and neither loves nor knows the light: the upper class has sweetness and knows the light but does not love it. The aristocracy "has actually in its well-known politeness a kind of image or shadow of sweetness; and as for light, if it does not pursue light, it is not that it perversely cherishes some dismal and illiberal existence in preference to light, but it is lured off from following light by those mighty and eternal seducers of our race which weave for this class their most irresistible charms —by worldly splendour, security, power, and pleasure." And so, he adds, "When I go through the country and

see this and that beautiful and imposing seat of theirs crowning the landscape, 'There,' I say to myself, 'is a great fortified post of the Barbarians.'" And again, in *Literature and Dogma:*—"I have myself called our aristocratic class 'Barbarians,' which is the contrary of Hellenes, . . . because with all their fine, fresh appearance, their open-air life, and their love of field sports, for reading and thinking they have in general no great turn."

Of the Barbarians he has not very much to say, and what he says is said in sorrow rather than in anger. They have had their chance and have let it slip. Time was when for purposes of government the aristocratic class was in fact as well as in name the best of all classes. It directed the nation's affairs from high to low by virtue of the natural predominance which superiority gives. Had it been minded it might have continued to assert this overwhelming influence still. Gradually, however, it has lost ground from sheer stagnation in intellectual growth. More and more it has ceased to live in the world of ideas, as it has developed the physical at the expense of the mental side of its nature, until it lacks all appreciation of modern movements and modern needs. "Child of the established fact," it possesses still a considerable spirit, rare distinction of manners, unapproachable dignity, but it is ineffectual as a governing force.

Although he thus regards the aristocracy as politically effete, he gives it its *congé* with bow and compli-

ment of the most graceful. He tells us that he comes to the consideration of its virtues and failings "with no prejudice," and he regards it still as "the worthiest, as it certainly has been the most successful, aristocracy of which history makes record." And even though it be no longer serviceable for the future, it has the memory of past domination to console it, and memory is a Paradise from which the Barbarians cannot, any more than meaner folk, be driven. Even though it be not strong on the intellectual side, it has at any rate a high spirit; it may not care for the masses any longer, but at least it offers for their silent admiration a spectacle of unequalled splendour. If, finally, it has ceased to exhibit the public and conspicuous virtues by which the multitude is captivated and led, its private and domestic virtues have continued and increased. Yet because its capacities and qualities are private and not public, its kingdom has passed to another.

That other is the middle class, a class characterised, in spite of admirable exceptions, by fatal deficiencies. To this class, Philistine in every fibre of its being, the balance of political power has been transferred, and no class was ever less worthy of discharging governing functions, lacking as it does all trace of intellectuality and capacity for broad ideas. The middle class is, indeed, the vaunted repository of the nation's energy and grit, of its force and fire; but unfortunately its abundant activity flows in the wrong channels. That part of its life which is not concentrated upon material pursuits

is concentrated upon political and religious contention about mere matters of machinery — brand-new franchises, anti-Establishment crusades, marriage law reforms in the special interest of those of their number who wish to marry their deceased wives' sisters — things which yield neither the fruit nor the promise of "sweetness and light." The thing which the middle class most needs, and the lack of which explains its futility and barrenness, is thought. "Let us *do* something, and above all let us *have* — very much," is its motto, but the thing it would do is not to reflect, and the things which it desires most to possess are not ideas. "The Englishman," writes Arnold in his early essay on *The Function of Criticism*, having doubtless the middle class specially in mind, "values what is political and practical so much that ideas easily become objects of dislike in his eyes, and thinkers 'miscreants,' because ideas and thinkers have rashly meddled with politics and practice. . . . The notion of the free play of the mind upon all subjects being a pleasure in itself, being an object of desire, being an essential provider of elements without which a nation's spirit, whatever compensations it may have for them, must in the long run die of inanition, hardly enters into an Englishman's thoughts."

Arnold has been rebuked, without either measure or intermission, for the harsh words which he applied to the Philistine middle class. And no wonder. Nobody likes to be told that he is uneducated. Even if it

be true, he prefers that the fact shall be concealed, and most of all be concealed from himself. Harsh his strictures certainly were, and no other class or section of people did the vials of his satire and wrath so mercilessly overwhelm. The Philistines are "ill educated, knowing how to make money, but not knowing how to live when they have made it." "The British Philistine is a trying personage," was the mild judgment which he passed upon the tribe for the benefit of his American hearers. But in America he talked warily, for he suspected that the British Philistine had many friends and relatives amongst his audiences. At home it was "the British Philistine with his likes and dislikes, his effusion and confusion, his hot and cold fits, his want of dignity and of the steadfastness which comes from diguity, his want of ideas and of the steadfastness which comes from ideas." [1] He speaks of the middle class as "testy, ignorant, a little ignoble, unapt to perceive when it is making itself ridiculous," [1] and deplores "the immense vulgar-mindedness, and, so far, real inferiority" of that class as "our national bane." In dithyrambic mood he pictures Philistinism as a "huge, black, cloud-topped, interminable precipice," and he can sympathise with Byron that he shattered himself against it, perhaps forgetting for a moment his own *Memorial Verses*.[2] In one of his Education

[1] *Irish Essays:* "The Future of Liberalism."

[2] With shivering heart the strife we saw
Of passion with eternal law.

Reports (1874) Arnold tells of a young genius whose acquaintance he made officially—a candidate for admission to a training college—who, in his determination to do justice to the multifarious uses of the adverb, gave distinction to his examination paper by stating: "There is a rule which says that if a word is not wanted in a sentence for any of the above ways, it shall be *thrown into the common sink, which is adverbs.*" One gets the idea at times that Arnold, when at a loss how to unburden his pent-up feelings, shot his expletives with equal inconsequence into a common sink — which was the Philistines.

And yet, on the other hand, he must be himself a hardened Philistine who is insensible to the fascination of the irony which enshrouds much of his reproof. The portrait of Mr. Bottles gives the "warts and all," since the warts were there, but if the contemporary Mr. Bottles did not laugh after the first rage of his vexation was over, invincible obtuseness was the reason. Of malice the critic who, while in public dealing out his keenest thrusts, playfully laments in private that "the risk [is] always before me, if I cannot charm the wild beast of Philistinism while I am trying to convert him, of being torn in pieces by him; and, even if I succeed to the utmost and convert him, of dying in a ditch or a Workhouse at the end of it all," [1] had not one particle in his nature. Besides, if his condemnation was severe, so also was the provocation. Into intimate association

[1] Letter of November 15, 1863.

with the middle class his official duty for a long series of years threw him, and the total impression he derived of its life, world of thought, ideals, and habits was not an inspiring one. Where religion was the supreme concern, he saw little but narrowness and strife and an utter inability to conceive of life as a large and artistic fabric made up of many parts, each claiming its due and proportionate place. Where commercialism was the dominant interest, he saw this same narrowness and want of balance but toned by vulgarity, and his whole soul rebelled at the travesty of life which it offered. "Culture says: 'Consider these people, then, their way of life, their habits, their manners, the very tones of their voice; look at them attentively; observe the literature they read, the things which give them pleasure, the words which come forth out of their mouths; the thoughts which make the furniture of their minds; would any amount of wealth be worth having with the condition that one was to become just like these people by having it?'" [1]

Doubtless he was unjust in speaking too generally of the middle class. "You cannot arraign a nation," said a famous statesman. Nor can you safely and wisely arraign a whole class. This Arnold did, and he was unfair in doing it. But the fault was not his wholly, for if his indictment was too wholesale and too arbitrary, he could at any rate plead that those spokesmen of the middle class who advanced the amazing

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, chapter i.

claim that culture was one of its special characteristics were guilty of the initial blame. At the height of Arnold's crusade on behalf of higher education the Parliamentary representative of an industrial constituency uttered a solemn protest in the words: "There had been a cry that middle class education ought to receive more attention. He confessed he was very much surprised by the clamour that was raised. He did not think that class need excite the sympathy either of the legislature or the public!" A sense of humour is the saving of human nature, whether in the individual or the nation, and if anything could warrant faith in the spiritual future of England it is the fact that no public man would dare to-day to avow sentiments like these. Yet Arnold did not forget that the middle class had, in his favourite phrase, a better self as well as an ordinary self, and that rawness, immaturity, and want of culture did not exhaust its qualities. With all his impatience with its failings, he still regarded it as "muscular, hard-working, *unblasé*"—"for it is this in spite of its abominable disagreeableness"—and he was desirous, years before the law of 1871 paved the way, to see the Nonconformist section of it sending its sons to the universities, there to "brace the flaccid sinews" of venerable and dignified conservatism. That he did not oftener dwell on the virtues of the middle class may safely be attributed to a firm belief that of these it was only too well assured, that of flattery it received enough and far more than enough, and that his duty

was to compel it to face and to acknowledge its deficiencies.

"The great middle classes of this country," he writes, "are conscious of no weakness, no inferiority. . . . Such as they are, they believe that the freedom and prosperity of England are their work, and that the future belongs to them. No one esteems them more than I do; but those who esteem them most, and who most believe in their capabilities, can render them no better service than by pointing out in what they underrate their deficiencies, and how their deficiencies, if unremedied, may impair their future. They want culture and dignity; they want ideas. Aristocracy has culture and dignity; democracy has readiness for new ideas and ardour for what ideas it possesses. Of these our middle class has the last only: ardour for the ideas it already possesses." [1]

And, after all, he soothes and encourages the Philistines by recalling the fact that he, too, was once a Philistine and one of themselves, not indeed sharing their meaner notions and ideals, yet like them given to measuring the universe with a foot rule, not sufficiently susceptible to sweetness and light, and disdaining the guidance of right reason. And though Philistine no more, his place was still, by the unchangeable dispensation of Providence, in the middle class—in it, though no longer of it. "And although through circumstances which will perhaps one day be known if ever

[1] Essay on "Democracy," in *Mixed Essays*.

the affecting history of my conversion comes to be written, I have, for the most part, broken with the ideas and the tea-meetings of my own class, yet I have not on that account been brought much the nearer to the ideas and works of the Barbarians or of the Populace." [1] For other Philistines, therefore, there was hope. If he could throw off the thrall of the middle-class spirit, so might they.

Every one knows, or should know, the inimitable figure which Arnold created in literature for the better embodiment of the Philistine character and ideals, that epiphany of the middle-class spirit, the redoubtable Mr. Bottles of *Friendship's Garland.* To the oracular Arminius of this notable *jeu d'esprit* Mr. Bottles is introduced as "one of our representative industrial men (something in the bottle way), a famous specimen of that great middle class whose energy and self-reliance make England what it is and who give the tone to our Parliament and to our policy." Beginning life as a Particular Baptist, the strenuous Mr. Bottles makes a fortune out of glass, and then turns Churchman because it is more becoming. Yet the man himself continues unchanged to the last — vulgar, heavy, narrow, obtuse; for neither money nor a fashionable religion nor the dignity of magisterial office can unmake the

[1] In *Culture and Anarchy* (the chapter on "Sweetness and Light") Arnold tells of the inward relief which accompanied his emancipation from the sway of Benjamin Franklin's "victorious good sense" and of Bentham's Utilitarianism.

Bottles nature; once there, it is not for an age but for all time. It was, of course, a Bottles of the Liberal way of politics that Arnold took as his type, yet the choice did not blind him to the fact that the members of the Bottles family are found in every political and social sphere. "Although it is with the Radical and Dissenting Bottles that I have occupied myself," he says in *Irish Essays*, "yet the Tory Bottles exists too, exists in great numbers and great force, particularly in London and its neighbourhood." And "the Tory Bottles" (he writes in a letter of April 2, 1880), "the shoddy Conservative, Stock Exchange or commercial, is terrible."

The memorable conversation before the inn away in the country, whither Arminius has been taken by his friend on a tour of social observation, is worthy of citation not only because it shows Barbarian and Philistine in characteristic conjunction, and throws further light upon the personality of Mr. Bottles, but because it contains one of Arnold's most scathing and best-deserved satires upon the English impatience of theoretical training, and upon the happy-go-lucky way in which certain departments of our official life are supplied with functionaries on the principle of unnatural selection. Within the inn three magistrates (Bottles is one) are holding court upon a peasant poacher, by name Zephaniah Diggs, and it occurs to Arminius to enrich his notebooks by the addition of facts concerning the qualifications of the English justice of the peace.

"What training have you made them give themselves, and what are their qualifications?" asks Arminius.

"I luckily happen to know Lord Lumpington and Hittall pretty well, having been at college with them in former days, when I little thought the Philistines would have brought my grey hairs to a garret in Grub Street; and I have made the acquaintance of Mr. Bottles since, and know all about him. So I was able to satisfy Arminius's curiosity, and I had great pleasure in making him remark, as I did so, the rich diversity of our English life, the healthy, natural play of our free institutions, and the happy blending of classes and characters which this promotes.

"The three magistrates in that inn," said I, "are not three Government functionaries all cut out of one block; they embody our whole national life;—the land, religion, commerce are all represented by them. Lord Lumpington is a peer of old family and great estate; Esau Hittall is a clergyman; Mr. Bottles is one of our self-made middle-class men. Their politics are not all of one colour, and that colour the Government's. Lumpington is a Constitutional Whig; Hittall is a benighted old Tory. As for Mr. Bottles, he is a Radical of the purest water; quite one of the Manchester school. He was one of the earliest free-traders; he has gone as straight as an arrow about Reform; he is an ardent voluntary in every possible line, opposed the Ten Hours Bill, was one of the leaders of the Dissent-

ing opposition out of Parliament which smashed up the education clauses of Sir James Graham's Factory Act; and he paid the whole expenses of a most important Church-rate contest out of his own pocket. And, finally, he looks forward to marrying his deceased wife's sister."

But Arminius is still unconvinced of their judicial qualifications.

"You propose to make old Diggs's boys instruct themselves before they may go bird scaring or sheep tending. I want to know what you do to make these three worthies in that justice room instruct themselves before they may go acting as magistrates and judges."

"Do?" said I; "why just look what they have all done of themselves. Lumpington and Hittall have had a public school and university education; Bottles has had Dr. Silverpump's and the practical training of business. What on earth would you have us make them do more?"

"Qualify themselves for administrative or judicial functions if they exercise them," answers the unconvinced Arminius. "I should like to know what has made Lord Lumpington a magistrate."

"Made Lord Lumpington a magistrate?" said I; "why, the Lumpington estate, to be sure."

"And the Reverend Esau Hittall?" continued Arminius.

"Why, the Lumpington living, of course," said I.

"And that man Bottles?" he went on.

"His English energy and self-reliance," I answered very stiffly, for Arminius's incessant carping began to put me in a huff; "those same incomparable and truly British qualities which have just triumphed over every obstacle and given us the Atlantic telegraph."

It is a too-true satire, just as applicable now as when it was written. One reads without wonder the letter in which Arnold tells his relatives (April 3, 1871): "It is also proposed to make me a magistrate for the county of Middlesex, but this last distinction I intend respectfully to decline." The pride that caused him to refuse to share the title of professor with conjurers and tight-rope dancers would not permit him to presume judicial fellowship with the Lord Chancellor and the Master of the Rolls.

Gross and perverse and difficult to influence though he knew the Philistine to be, Arnold had moods in which he indulged hopes of his ultimate transformation. The Barbarians he felt to be past praying for. "Keeping in mind," he writes, in *Literature and Dogma*, "what Scripture says about the young man who had great possessions, to be able to work a change of mind in our aristocratic class we never have pretended, we never shall pretend." For the Philistine he prayed and prayed fervently. "I never read St. Paul on the Jews," he writes audaciously, in January, 1879, "but I feel how exactly his sentiment about the Jews answers to mine about our middle class—'My heart's desire and prayer,' etc., etc." ("My heart's desire

and prayer is that Israel may be saved.") And though in that spirited little poem, *The Last Word*,[1] one can plainly detect an intense disgust and disappointment that his efforts to convince the Philistines of the error of their ways, and to win them to a higher and worthier ideal of life, had not so far been crowned by the success which he anticipated, he never entirely despaired. His greatest confidence was that their own interest, the preservation of their influence and power, required that they should seek culture and pursue it, and that they would one day make the great discovery.

"In spite of all that is said about the absorbing and brutalising influence of our passionate material progress," he writes, "it seems to me indisputable that this progress is likely, though not certain, to lead in the end to an apparition of intellectual life; and that man, after he has made himself perfectly comfortable and has

[1] Creep into thy narrow bed,
Creep, and let no more be said!
Vain thy onset! all stands fast.
Thou thyself must break at last.
Let the long contention cease!
Geese are swans, and swans are geese.
Let them have it how they will!
Thou art tired; best be still.
They out-talk'd thee, hiss'd thee, tore thee?
Better men fared thus before thee;
Fired their ringing shot and pass'd,
Hotly charged—and sank at last.
Charge once more, then, and be dumb,
Let the victors, when they come,
When the forts of folly fall,
Find thy body by the wall!

now to determine what to do with himself next, may begin to remember that he has a mind, and that the mind may be made a source of great pleasure. I grant that it is mainly the privilege of faith at present to discern this end to our railways, our business, and our fortune-making; but we shall see if, here as elsewhere, faith is not in the end the true prophet."

Perhaps one can best show admiration of his indomitable faith by endeavouring to appropriate it, and by handing forward the yet unrealised prophecy as an inspiring possibility of the future.

Yet in spite of faith, hope, and supplication, Arnold never made truce with those whom he regarded as the enemies of the light. The Bible of culture might be in one hand, but the sword was ever in the other. Not for him were the words of Rustum spoken:

> What should I do with slaying any more?
> For would that all that I have ever slain
> Might be once more alive; my bitterest foes,
> And they who were call'd champions in their time,
> And through whose death I won the fame I have.[1]

Though Arnold gave to the entire manual working class the generic name Populace he recognised that this class, even more than the others, lacked identity of ideal and solidarity of interest. Part of it had already crossed the frontiers of Philistia, insofar as it had imbibed the spirit and aspirations of the industrial middle class, and he assumed that sooner or later it would

[1] *Sohrab and Rustum* (Poems).

formally join forces with that class and work for the same political and social millennium. Here he has shown himself a true reader of the signs of the times. The modern industrial era has indeed created a large division of society in which differentiation as between middle class and working class has no meaning, no existence whatever, in matters of culture,— education, refinement of mind, and manners. Arnold passed much criticism, censorious perhaps, but wholesome and in any case necessary, upon the dull aspect and the unlovely life of Lancashire factory towns as he knew them. One need not wonder long where he went for the picture given in the poem *Worldly Place*, of

> . . . the stifling den
> Of common life, where, crowded up pell-mell,
> Our freedom for a little bread we sell,
> And drudge under some foolish master's ken,
> Who rates us if we peer outside our pen—
> Matched with a palace, is not this a hell?

From the scene so incisively characterised a huge chimney weirdly suggestive of Tophet was assuredly not far distant. In external things there has doubtless been progress in the interval; the streets are less dreary, though dreary enough; municipal enterprise has created museums, art galleries, and libraries; the domestic condition of the masses is improved; the schools are crowded; churches and chapels abound. Yet these, as he has so often told us, are but matters of machinery, and while they may have prevented

actual lapse in civilisation, it is questionable whether they have advanced the inner life, the life of the spirit. When materialism asserts such a grip upon human nature that education is not merely not valued but is not desired, that the only estimate of human worth is the money estimate, and the first question asked about the stranger within the gates is not, "Who is he?" but, "How much has he?" that the one, all-engrossing concern is to get rich, yet not even then with a view to enjoying riches in tranquillity, but to getting richer than some one else, the question may well suggest itself whether life on such lines is anything more than polished barbarism.

There was, however, another section of the working class which had lagged behind in the material race — "which, raw and half-developed, has long lain half-hidden amidst its poverty and squalor, and is now issuing from its hiding-place to assert an Englishman's heaven-born privilege of doing what he likes, and is beginning to perplex us by marching where it likes, meeting where it likes, bawling what it likes, breaking what it likes,— to this vast residuum we may with great propriety give the name of *Populace*." Toward the Populace he felt by no means unkindly, warmly though he deprecated its occasional lapse into clamour and violence. Recognising the instinct for expansion as essential to civilisation, he could regard with sympathy its endeavour to affirm itself—"to live, to enjoy, to possess the world, as aristocracy has tried, and suc-

cessfully tried, before it,"— for in so doing it simply followed a law of its being. "So potent is the charm of life and expansion upon the living; the moment men are aware of them, they begin to desire them, and the more they have of them, the more they crave." Where democracy sought equality, indeed, he saw no reason for either resistance or alarm, so long as its efforts were orderly and were not prompted by motives of envy and greed.

"A certain approach to equality, at any rate a certain reduction of signal inequalities, is a natural, instinctive demand of that impulse which drives society as a whole — no longer individuals and limited classes only, but the mass of a community — to develop itself with the utmost possible fulness and freedom." He saw clearly also that a stagnant aristocracy and a vigorous democracy are incompatible partners in a commonwealth, so that whether we would or no, a movement towards equality was unavoidable and was bound to succeed.

"Aristocracies almost inevitably fail to appreciate justly, or even to take into their mind, the instinct pushing the masses towards expansion and fuller life. . . . [Hence] except on conditions which make its expansion, in the sense understood by itself, fully possible, democracy will never frankly ally itself with aristocracy." The special danger of the democracy, however, is that having overthrown the tutelage of the aristocracy, it may get its own way too much. Of all

classes it has the greatest need of ideals, and yet these ideals must be found outside its own ranks.

Yet he forbids Barbarian and Philistine alike to look down upon their humbler relation. The Populace may have little of the Barbarian's polish, and less of the Philistine's lucre, but they have both much of its spirit, insofar as they seek to affirm the self and either foster violence in themselves or encourage it in others. Quite as pertinent to these days as to thirty years ago is his indictment of muscular politics:

"Every time that we snatch up a vehement opinion in ignorance and passion, every time that we long to crush an adversary by sheer violence, every time that we are envious, every time that we are brutal, every time that we adore mere power or success, every time that we add our voice to swell a blind clamour against some unpopular personage, every time that we trample savagely on the fallen," we betray in our own bosoms "the eternal spirit of the Populace." It is in this propensity to indulge the ordinary self, with its crudeness and imperfections, that all three classes, in spite of the widest external differences, betray a common nature, though from each class emerge at all times exceptional spirits who are conscious of aspiration after perfection and give effect to that aspiration by casting off the characteristics of their fellows.

CHAPTER V

PUBLIC EDUCATION

I

MANY of the principles of public instruction which Arnold laid down in innumerable discussions on the subject, valuable as they are in themselves, have ceased to possess practical urgency, for the satisfactory reason that they have become embodied in the educational legislation and institutions of the country, and are fairly secure against any possible spirit of reaction. Here he spoke with unique authority, for education was the special study of his life, and the debt which our school system owes to his enlightened and far-seeing study of the nation's needs is no inconsiderable one. That this debt is not greater still must be attributed to the slowness of the public mind to adopt other of his theories and suggestions, which yet, so sound and inevitable have they been found to be, are to-day, after the lapse of nearly half a century, coming visibly to fruition.

The reader who, after so long an interval, goes to Arnold's published School Reports — an invaluable

treasure-house of sagacious observation upon a hundred points of detail in the theory and practice of pedagogics, illumined here and there by those ever-welcome flashes of satire and humour which often convinced where argument would have been used in vain — will find his search amply rewarded. For he anticipated most of the lines upon which progress in primary education was to be made long before education became the sport of politics, and the exigencies of party warfare were needed to stimulate Parliamentary interest in this greatest of a nation's secular concerns. Where the questions which he discusses are still undetermined, his reflections are nevertheless instructive for the light they throw on the historical difficulty of reconciling two antagonistic conceptions of education—the national and the ecclesiastical. As early as 1853 we find him reporting his "firm conviction that education will never become universal in this country until it is made compulsory," yet seventeen years were to pass before a move was made in that direction, and even then the compulsory powers created were of optional application. When, too, an obligatory law had become imminent he foresaw clearly the difficulties which have in practice been experienced — chief of them the absence of general enthusiasm for education in any one class of the community.

"Throughout my district I find the idea of compulsory education becoming a familiar idea with those who are interested in schools," he reports in 1867. "I

imagine that with the newly awakened sense of our shortcomings in popular education . . . the difficult thing would not be to pass a law making education compulsory; the difficult thing would be to work such a law after we had got it. In Prussia, which is so often quoted, education is not flourishing because it is compulsory, it is compulsory because it is flourishing. Because people there really prize instruction and culture, and prefer them to other things, therefore they have no difficulty in imposing on themselves the rule to get instruction and culture. In this country people prefer to them politics, station, business, money-making, pleasure, and many other things."

He foresaw also that compulsory education would inevitably mean the freeing of the schools, and as early as 1869 he spoke of "gratuitous schooling" as one of the questions "rapidly passing out of the sphere of abstract discussion, and entering into the sphere of practical politics. In that sphere, however they may be settled, it will not and cannot be on their merits." Everybody knows how free education came suddenly in 1891, when few people expected it. Yet he had his misgivings on the subject. On principle he held that "people value more highly and use more respectfully that which they pay a price for," and further: "To have an expensive public education for one class of the community only, and to make it gratuitous, is practically to fall in with the ideas of Jack Cade." Clearly one conclusion which he did not draw from his careful

study of the educational policies of Germany and France was that the free school is, on political principles, the corollary of the compulsory school—that the State, by imposing upon its citizens the obligation to have their children educated in public schools up to a certain minimum standard of proficiency, whether they like it or not, whether they can afford it or not, on the principle that education is a national interest, commits itself to the obligation of providing this education at the common cost.

The system of payment by results, as introduced in 1861, and continued for thirty-six years, he abhorred, and he satirised it as openly as he dared in his official reports. Thus at its introduction: "The idea of payment by results was just the idea to be caught up by the ordinary public opinion of this country and to find favour with it. . . . These changes gratify one or other of several great forces of public opinion which are potent in this country, and a legislation which gratifies these ought perhaps to be pronounced successful." It was 1897 before the last trace of this demoralising mercantile system was swept away.

Of secular education pure and simple he was no less pronounced an opponent in spite of his own theological reservations, and he regarded the modified use of the Bible as "the only chance of saving the one elevating and inspiring element in the scanty instruction of our primary schools from being sacrificed to a politico-religious difficulty. There was no Greek school in which

Homer was not read; cannot our popular schools, with their narrow range and their jejune alimentation in secular literature, do as much for the Bible as the Greek schools did for Homer?" As specially suitable for school study he recommended the main outlines of Bible history, a selection of the Psalms, the most interesting passages from the historical and prophetical books of the Old Testament — he himself prepared *A Bible Reading for Schools*, based on the Prophecies of Isaiah—and the chief parables, discourses, and exhortations of the New. The grounds of his commendation of catechetical instruction are, however, difficult to reconcile with the main argument of his book *Literature and Dogma*, which is that the metaphysical element in religion is a stumbling-block to the unlearned. "The enemies of catechisms have perhaps never considered," he quaintly reports in 1878, "how a catechism is for the child in an elementary school his only contact with metaphysics; it is possible to have too much metaphysics, but some contact with them is to every active mind suggestive and helpful. The Bible, again, is for the child in an elementary school almost his only contact with poetry and philosophy." Though he did not regard the denominational system as an ideal arrangement from an educational standpoint, he accepted it as inevitable in view of "the sectarian tendencies of the English people," and even went so far, as an Inspector, as to solicit the greatest possible co-operation of the clergy and ministers in the supervision of

the voluntary schools, and to regard it as a fault in the Nonconformists that they were slow to take their full share of work of this kind.

In the elementary not less than in the secondary schools he resisted the tendency to extol science at the expense of letters. In 1876 he uttered the warning, which experience has amply justified, that "More and more pressure there will be, especially in the instruction of the children of the working class, whose time for schooling is short, to substitute natural science for literature and history as the more useful alternative." He contended, however, that "The fruitful use of natural science itself depends, in a very great degree, on having effected in the whole man, by means of letters, a rise in what the political economists call the standard of life. . . . To have the power of using, which is the thing wished, these data of natural science, a man must, in general, have first been in some measure moralised; and for moralising him it will be found not easy, I think, to dispense with those old agents, letters, poetry, religion." So convinced was he of the value of classical study that he desired to see Latin taught in a simple way in the upper forms of the elementary schools, so that even the children of the working classes might possess a vocabulary, however restricted, of another language than their own. And here, again, it was characteristic of his attachment to the Bible as a book of unexcelled disciplinary value that he advocated neither Cæsar nor Cornelius Nepos nor Eutropius, but

the Vulgate version of the Scriptures as the proper text-book: "A chapter or two from the story of Joseph, a chapter or two from Deuteronomy, and the first two chapters of St. Luke's Gospel would be the sort of delectus we want." In a word, the foremost aim of elementary education, restricted though it must necessarily be, should be to humanise. So in his Notebook he endorses the maxim, taken, one may guess, from Wilhelm von Humboldt: "Ich beabsichtige eine allgemeine Bildung aller, welche als Menschen geboren sind, zu allem was menschlich ist."

II

Arnold's less technical treatment of education is scattered amongst a dozen essays and addresses. The ideal which he advances is a high and dignified one. Never would he brook any paring down of the full scope and purpose of education. Education means one thing and one only, the development of the whole nature, and to depart from that conception is an act of intellectual perfidy. The practical man, who refuses to recognise education as a self-purpose, and insists that its meaning and value vary with the end in view, applies the word "education" indifferently to every species of training, not merely of the cogitative and moral faculties, but even more of the manual and mechanical. Arnold replies that the end of education is simply to be educated; what follows is secondary. He adopts Plato's definition of education as the pursuit of "those

studies which result in [the] soul getting soberness, righteousness, and wisdom," and this definition he regards as equally applicable "whether we are preparing ourselves for a hereditary seat in the English House of Lords or for the pork trade in Chicago."[1] And, technical aspects of the question apart, his unique merit as an educationist lies in the earnestness and enthusiasm, amounting to a moral passion, with which he advocated education on the lines of classical study and the old humanities. To the last he was an ardent champion of the "grand old fortifying curriculum" which it was his own Oxford's chiefest praise to maintain in the face of a materialistic and an unbelieving age. "Oxford, the Oxford of the past, has many faults," he writes in *Culture and Anarchy*, "and she has heavily paid for them in defeat, in isolation, in want of hold upon the modern world. Yet we in Oxford, brought up amidst the beauty and sweetness of that beautiful place, have not failed to seize one truth: the truth that beauty and sweetness are essential characters of a complete human perfection."

"A complete human perfection"—that was his ideal of education, and his faith was never shaken that it was attainable by literary rather than by scientific study. It was characteristic of the man, of his candour and courage, that he made a lecturing visit to the United States the occasion of one of his most powerful

[1] Essay on "Literature and Science," in *Discourses in America*.

protests, or, more truly, arguments, against the movement for ousting letters from their old predominance in education, and for enthroning the natural sciences in their place, though, indeed, the movement was not then so popular or so systematic as now.[1] Perhaps he gives to science a place in the scheme of education too small for its deserts,—the scientist, at any rate, will contend so,—yet he maintains that when science has told a man all it has to tell, when it has explained the action of natural law, traced the descent of the human race from its ancestry in the tropical forest, measured remote worlds, and made the mystery of force and matter still more mysterious by its speculations, its discipline leaves him with the greater part of his nature unawakened and unsatisfied, and, above all, he is as unprepared as ever for the practical duty of living a fair, harmonious, well-balanced human life. For it is knowledge of dead facts only which the men of science give us—"knowledge not put for us into relation with our sense for conduct, our sense for beauty, and

[1] While Arnold told his English audience that technical universities like Cornell "seem to rest on a misconception of what culture truly is, and to be calculated to produce miners, or engineers, or architects, not sweetness and light" (Preface to *Culture and Anarchy*), he told his American hearers by way of consolation: "In the very Senate House and heart of our English Cambridge I once ventured, though not without an apology for my profaneness, to hazard the opinion that for the majority of mankind a little of mathematics, even, goes a long way." (Lecture on "Literature and Science," published in *Discourses in America*.)

touched with emotion by being so put; not thus put for us, and therefore, to the majority of mankind, after a certain while, unsatisfying, wearying." [1] Here comes in the larger idea of education, whose function it is to bridge the gulf between knowledge and conduct.

"The mediæval universities came into being because the supposed knowledge delivered by Scripture and the Church so deeply engaged men's hearts, by so simply, easily, and powerfully relating itself to their desire for conduct, their desire for beauty. All other knowledge was dominated by this supposed knowledge and was subordinated to it, because of the surpassing strength of the hold which it gained upon the affections of men, by allying itself profoundly with their sense for conduct, their sense for beauty." [2]

And if physical science has exploded the old ideas of the universe which the mediæval university taught to a credulous and contented age, thus liberating the emotions which were swayed by these erroneous conceptions, the need for humane letters, by which to establish a vital relationship between "the new conceptions and our instinct for beauty, our instinct for conduct," becomes only the more urgent:

"And the more that men's minds are cleared, the more that the results of science are frankly accepted, the more that poetry and eloquence come to be received and studied as what in truth they really are —

[1] "Literature and Science," in *Discourses in America.*
[2] *Ibid.*

the criticism of life by gifted men, alive and active with extraordinary power at an unusual number of points:—so much the more will the value of humane letters, and of art also, which is an utterance having a like kind of power with theirs, be felt and acknowledged, and their place in education be secured." [1]

He goes so far as to say that if choice should have to be made between humane letters and the natural sciences "all who have not exceptional and overpowering aptitudes for the study of nature would do well, I cannot but think, to choose to be educated in humane letters rather than in the natural sciences. Letters will call out their being at most points, will make them *live* more." And again: "The student of humane letters only will, at least, know also the great general conceptions brought in by modern physical science . . . but the student of the natural sciences only will, by our very hypothesis, know nothing of humane letters; not to mention that in setting himself to be perpetually accumulating natural knowledge, he sets himself to do what only specialists have in general the gift for doing genially. And so he will probably be unsatisfied, or at any rate incomplete, and even more incomplete than the student of humane letters only." [2]

He takes care, however, to guard himself against the suspicion that in advocating education in letters he means *belles-lettres* or any "superficial humanism."

[1] "Literature and Science," in *Discourses in America.*

[2] *Ibid.*

"In our culture," he writes in *Literature and Science*, and the sentiment appears in different setting, yet always pointing the same moral, in many of his books,— "in our culture the aim being to know ourselves and the world, we have, as the means to this end, to know the best which has been thought and said in the world." Pre-eminently, then, the classical writers of antiquity must be studied and known, not, indeed, as text-books are studied and known, but for their widening and humanising influence upon the mind.

"When we talk of knowing Greek and Roman antiquity, for instance, which is the knowledge people have called the humanities, I for my part mean a knowledge which is something more than a superficial humanism, mainly decorative . . . more than a knowledge of so much vocabulary, so much grammar, so many portions of authors in the Greek and Latin languages. I mean knowing the Greeks and Romans, and their life and genius, and what they were and did in the world; what we get from them, and what is its value. That, at least, is the ideal; and when we talk of endeavouring to know Greek and Roman antiquity, as a help to knowing ourselves and the world, we mean endeavouring so to know them as to satisfy this ideal, however much we may still fall short of it." [1]

The argument for classical learning was never more admirably presented than by Matthew Arnold, himself intellectually a product of the classical spirit. Some of

[1] *Literature and Science.*

his words on this subject strike the note of finality and permanence: they say the best that is to be said, and they say it with irresistible force. "It seems to me firstly," he writes in *A Speech at Eton*, "that what a man seeks through his education is to get to know himself and the world; next, that for this knowledge it is before all things necessary that he acquaint himself with the best which has been thought and said in the world; finally, that of this best the classics of Greece and Rome form a very chief portion, and the portion most entirely satisfactory. With these conclusions lodged safe in one's mind, one is staunch on the side of the humanities." [1] One might quote without cessation to the same effect. "Strike into it [classical literature] where you like, lay hold of it where you like, you can nearly always find a thread which will lead you, if you follow it, to large and instructive results." "The best in literature has the quality of being in itself formative,—silently formative; of bringing out its own significance as we read it." "Sanity—that is the great virtue of the ancient literature; the want of that is the great defect of the modern, in spite of all its variety and power. It is impossible to read carefully the great ancients, without losing something of our caprice and eccentricity; and to emulate them we must at least read them." [1] And a more personal note is occasionally struck: "I know not how it is, but their commerce with the ancients appears to me to produce,

[1] *Irish Essays.* [1] Prefaces to *Poems* (1853).

in those who constantly practise it, a steadying and composing effect upon their judgment, not of literary works only, but of men and events in general. They are like persons who have had a very weighty and impressive experience; who are more truly than others under the empire of facts, and more independent of the language current among those with whom they live. They wish neither to applaud nor to revile their age; they wish to know what it is, what it can give them, and whether this is what they want. What they want they know very well; they want to educe and cultivate what is best and noblest in themselves."[1]

The cultivation of Greek he especially advocated on the ground that it ministers to the instinct for beauty in human nature—an instinct as surely set there as the instinct for knowledge or the instinct for conduct. He believed, indeed, that Greek would be given a more conspicuous place in education as mankind realised the need for satisfying this instinct for beauty and came to understand how Greek art and literature are pre-eminently fitted to serve that end.

But acquaintance with modern not less than with ancient letters he interpreted in a wide and general sense. While his educated man was a man whose mind was alert at all points, the smatterer he abhorred. As, in his scheme of education, knowledge of ancient Rome meant, besides knowledge of literature, knowledge of "Rome's military, and political, and legal, and

[1] Prefaces to *Poems* (1853).

administrative work in the world," and knowledge of ancient Greece meant, besides knowledge of "certain Greek poems and histories, and treatises and speeches," knowledge of Greece "as the giver of Greek art and the guide to a free and right use of reason and to scientific method, and the founder of our mathematics and physics and astronomy and biology," so also he conceived knowledge of modern nations to imply knowledge of the sciences as well as of letters. "All knowledge is interesting to a wise man, and the knowledge of nature is interesting to all men." Hence in his definition of culture as "knowing the best which has been thought and said in the world," that "best" necessarily includes "what in modern times has been thought and said by the great observers and knowers of nature."[1] Yet even here comes a great reservation — it must be letters first and science afterwards: that is the true progression and sequence of knowledge regarded as a discipline of life.

That either classical or literary studies would ever be supplanted he disbelieved, though he was prepared to see their place challenged again and again as the inevitable tendency to give a scientific bias to education became more aggressive.

"As with Greek so with letters generally: they will some day come, we may hope, to be studied more rationally, but they will not lose their place. What will happen will rather be that there will be crowded

[1] *Literature and Science.*

into education other matters besides, far too many; there will be, perhaps, a period of unsettlement and confusion and false tendency; but letters will not in the end lose their leading place. If they lose it for a time, they will get it back again. We shall be brought back to them by our wants and aspirations." [1]

And again: "When we set ourselves to enumerate the powers which go to the building up of human life, and say that they are the power of conduct, the power of intellect and knowledge, the power of beauty, and the power of social life and manners [the man of science] can hardly deny that this scheme, though drawn in rough and plain lines enough, and not pretending to scientific exactness, does yet give a fairly true representation of the matter. Human nature is built up by these powers; we have the need for them all. When we have rightly met and adjusted the claims of them all, we shall then be in a fair way for getting soberness and righteousness, with wisdom." [2]

Very characteristic of Arnold is his impatience of insularity in intellectual judgments. English of the English, he yet emphasises acquaintance with foreign literature and foreign thought as a special need of his countrymen, exposed as they are in an exceptional degree to the danger of national self-satisfaction. "All mere glorification by ourselves of ourselves or our literature," he writes in his essay on *The Literary Influence of Academies*, "is both vulgar and, besides

[1] *Literature and Science.* [2] *Ibid.*

being vulgar, is retarding." The thing is to seek the best wherever it is to be found, and to appropriate it. The "best spiritual work" of criticism he defines as to lead man "towards perfection, by making his mind dwell upon what is excellent in itself, and the absolute beauty and fitness of things," and in generous appreciation of the "best which has been thought and said" abroad he himself has been excelled by no other literary critic.

III

"Our middle classes are among the worst educated in the world," was Arnold's lament when first he took up the question of education as a public mission, and vigorously though he strove for thirty years, both with pen and voice, to bring England to a love of learning, he did not live to see the day when he could withdraw or even truthfully modify this terrible indictment. In thus speaking he had in mind, of course, the commercial and industrial wing of the middle class, and its continued illiteracy he attributed to an insufficiency of schools and the inferiority of such schools as existed for their use. The titled and the wealthy classes, with their Eton and Harrow, had little to complain of,—though here not a few later education reformers have risen up in judgment against Arnold himself,—but the middle class had in the main to rely upon a system of private "academies" native to England, and the laughing-stock of the rest of the world. Defining the middle class in *Irish Essays*, he says:

"I have always adopted an educational test, and by the middle class I understand those who are brought up at establishments which are more or less like Salem House and by educators who are more or less like Mr. Creakle.[1] And the great mass of the middle part of our community, the part which comes between those who labour with their hands on the one side, and people of fortune on the other, is brought up at establishments of the kind, although there is a certain portion broken off at the top which is educated at better. But the great mass are both badly taught and are also brought up on a lower plane than is right, brought up ignobly. And this deteriorates their standard of life, their civilisation. It helps to produce in them, and it perpetuates, a defective type of religion, a narrow range of intellect and knowledge, a stunted sense of beauty, a low standard of manners."

It was his first idea, due to an instinctive distrust of the religious leaders of Dissent, that the Nonconformist pulpit was here the real obstacle to progress, and that if this enemy could be overcome the rest of the campaign would be child's play. "I mean . . . to deliver the middle classes out of the hand of their Dissenting ministers," he writes in a letter of 1864; "the mere difficulty of the task is itself rather an additional

[1] Arnold takes up Dickens's famous satire in *David Copperfield* in several of his essays, *e. g.*, "The Incompatibles," reprinted in *Irish Essays*. In *Friendship's Garland* he introduces his own variant, Dr. Silverpump of the Lycurgus House Academy.

incentive to undertake it." He had to learn, and the knowledge soon came, that indifference to higher education, and indeed to education of every kind, was a national defect and was not confined to a single class.

Nevertheless, it was in the middle class that the evils of defective education were most patent: and chief of these evils, next to the deterioration of the whole range of life and thought already spoken of, was the intellectual gulf which divided that class from the aristocratic class, and incapacitated it from being a helpful governing factor in society. In the course of his official investigations in France he had seen how there "the system of public secondary education . . . effaces between the middle and upper classes the sense of social alienation; it gives to the boy of the middle class the studies, the superior teaching, the sense of belonging to a great school which the Eton or Harrow boy has with us; it tends to give to the middle classes precisely what they most want, and their want of which makes the gulf between them and the upper—it tends to give them personal dignity." Visits to Germany on a similar mission only served to emphasise the same impression. There, too, he found that the upper and middle classes were brought up on the same educational plane, while in England the middle class, excluding always the professions, enjoyed no education at all worthy the name. Hence a separation infinitely more marked, more effectual, than any created by rank or wealth, since it divided these two classes into different worlds

of thought and idea. It was true that the educated members of the professional class forsook their social kindred and gravitated to the aristocracy, but this, again, was not an unmixed advantage, since by so doing they sacrificed individuality and mental independence,—a heavy loss to be set against even the gain of dignity and moderation.

"They are separate, to a degree unknown on the Continent, from the commercial and industrial classes, with which in social standing they are naturally on a level. So we have amongst us the spectacle of a middle class cut in two in a way unexampled anywhere else; of a professional class brought up on the first plane, with fine and governing qualities, but disinclined to rely on reason and science; while that immense business class, which is becoming so important a power in all countries, on which the future so much depends, and which in the great public schools of other countries fills so large a place, is in England brought up on the second plane, cut off from the aristocracy and the professions, and without governing qualities."

For its own sake and for the nation's sake, therefore, he contended that the commercial middle class should no longer be allowed to live the life of isolation to which lack of education doomed it.

The fertile brain which so readily detected social defects was never less ready to propound remedies. And here the remedy was a system of public schools established by the State. So early as 1859 we find Arnold

pleading in his School Reports that some enlightened Government would take up this question of middle-class education. "Either the education of this mass [of the middle class] must remain what it is, vulgar and unsound; or the State must create by its legislation, its aid, its inspection, institutions honourable because of their public character, and cheap because nationally frequented, in which they may receive a better." This idea of State action and direction he obtained from France in the first place, but also from Germany, whose system of public schools he admired the more with every visit he paid to the country, though he was discriminating enough to deprecate any wholesale imitation.

In the monograph upon higher education entitled *A French Eton*,[1] he develops his ideas of State action most systematically, premising: "I have no pet scheme to press, no crotchet to gratify, no fanatical zeal for giving this or that particular shape to the public establishment of our secondary instruction. All I say is, that it is most urgent to give to the establishment of it a wider, a truly public character, and that only the State can give this."

[1] Writing of this book February 11, 1864, he says: "In my notions about the State I am quite papa's son, and his continuator. I often think of this—the more so because in this direction he has had so few who felt with him. But I inherit from him a deep sense of what in the Greek and Roman world was sound and rational." And, again, May 10, 1864: "People say it is *revolutionary*, but all unconstrained thinking tends, perhaps, to be a little revolutionary."

"Why cannot we," he asks, "have throughout England — as the French have throughout France, as the Germans have throughout Germany, as the Swiss have throughout Switzerland, as the Dutch have throughout Holland—schools where children of our middle and professional classes may obtain, at the rate of from £20 to £50 a year if they are boarders, at the rate of from £5 to £15 a year if they are day scholars, an education of as good quality, with as good guarantees, social character, and advantages for a future career in the world, as the education which French children of the corresponding class can obtain from institutions like that of Toulouse or Sorèze?" [1]

His ideal was, not "the school a family," but "the school a little world." At school a boy should come under just those formative influences which are lacking in his ordinary surroundings. Then (as now) the middle class parent thought more of comfort than education: that school should be a sort of "home from home," to use the hackneyed phrase of the public host, was the desirable thing. If any one doubts the persistence of the same domestic conception of the school, let him consult the pages of advertisements which are to be found weekly in several well-known journals — advertisements which have no counterpart

[1] He had taken as models (because he had specially visited them) the Lyceum at Toulouse and the famous school conducted by Père Lacordaire at Sorèze, of which the reader will find an interesting account in Chocarne's *Lacordaire, sa vie intime et religieuse.*

in either France or Germany, for the simple reason that private institutions of the kind are there not tolerated. Arnold's wish was rather to give boys in school, and especially in the residential school, the ideas and the stimulus they could not hope to receive at home. "It seems to me that for the class frequenting Eton the grand aim of education should be to give them those good things which their birth and rearing are least likely to give them: to give them (besides mere book-learning) the notion of a sort of republican fellowship, the practice of a plain life in common, the habit of self-help. To the middle class the grand aim of education should be to give largeness of soul and personal dignity; to the lower class, feeling, gentleness, humanity."

And, coming to practical measures: "What is really needed," he wrote later in an essay significantly entitled *Porro unum necessarium est*, "is to follow the precedent of the Elementary Education Act [of 1870] by requiring the provision throughout the country of a proper supply of secondary schools, with proper buildings and accommodations, at a proper fee, and with proper guarantees given by the teachers either in the shape of a university degree or of a special certificate for secondary instruction. . . . The existing resources for secondary instruction, if judiciously co-ordered and utilised, would prove to be immense; but undoubtedly gaps would have to be filled, an annual State grant and municipal grants would be necessary. That is to say, the nation would perform, as a corporate and co-operative

work, a work which is now never conceived and laid out as a whole, but is done sporadically, precariously, and insufficiently. . . . The middle class who contribute so immense a share of the cost incurred for the public institution of elementary schools, while their own school supply is so miserable, would be repaid twenty times over for their share in the additional cost of publicly instituting secondary instruction by the direct benefit which they and theirs would get from its system of schools. The upper class, which has bought out the middle class at so many of the great foundation schools designed for its benefit, and which has monopolised what good secondary instruction we have, owes to the middle class the reparation of contributing to a public system of secondary schools."

It was his idea that these secondary or intermediate schools should be of two grades—the classical side predominating in those of one grade and the modern side in the other. All existing secondary schools he was wishful to incorporate in this new system under proper guarantees, leaving time and the pressure of circumstances to effect their transformation and adaptation to modern needs. Of these schools he writes in *A French Eton:*

"The four or five hundred endowed schools, whose collective operations now give so little result, should be turned to better account; amalgamation should be used, the most useful of these institutions strengthened, the most useless suppressed, the whole body of them

be treated as one whole, destined harmoniously to co-operate towards one end. What should be had in view is to constitute in every county at least one great centre of secondary instruction, with low charges, with the security of inspection, and with a public character. These institutions should bear some such title as that of Royal Schools, and should derive their support, mainly, of course, from school fees, but partly also from endowments—their own or those appropriated to them—and partly from scholarships supplied by public grants. Wherever it is possible, wherever, that is, their scale of charges is not too high, or their situation not too unsuitable, existing schools of good repute should be adopted as the Royal Schools."

While, however, he saw no hope of achieving any good result unless the State took the matter in hand on large and bold lines, he was not desirous that the State should interfere too much. He expected it to determine the school provision which was needful and to require it to be supplied within a specified time, but the work of administration he proposed to localise as far as possible, only reserving to the State the right to see that efficient teaching staffs were engaged, independent annual examinations held, and that the school buildings were "sufficient, suitably fitted and kept, and wholesome."

That in spite of his horror of the "academy" he should have deprecated interference with private enterprise in education is not a little surprising, especially

when one remembers how he improved upon Dickens himself in flagellating the private school system under the guise of Lycurgus House Academy and its conductors in the person of Dr. Silverpump, in the ever-fragrant *Friendship's Garland.* Of course every private school even then was not a Lycurgus House and every private schoolmaster was not an Archimedes Silverpump, but Lycurgus House and Silverpump, like Salem House and Mr. Creakle before them, were only the extravagances of a system bad in principle and vicious in results. Nevertheless, we find him asking: "Who supposes that any check would ever be put in England upon private enterprise in founding schools? Who supposes that the authorisation demanded in France for opening a private school would ever be demanded in England, that it would ever be possible to demand it, that it would ever be desirable? Who supposes that all the benefits of a public establishment of instruction are not to be obtained without it?" Perhaps most education reformers nowadays agree that until private enterprise is checked, and public authorities are encouraged to occupy the ground hitherto held by the modernised equivalent of the olden "academy," the intellectual elevation of the middle class which Arnold so heartily desired will never be accomplished. It is true, as he himself says of ecclesiastical competition in the domain of education, that "When instruction has once been powerfully organised in this [private] manner, it is very difficult for the State after-

wards to interfere for the purpose of giving effect to the requirements of the modern spirit. It is met by vested interests — by legitimate vested interests — not to be conciliated without great delay and difficulty." The prudent course, then, would be at least to prevent the growth of new vested interests, instead of leaving middle-class education still to the mercy of the law of supply and demand, without even taking care to regulate the quality of the article provided.

Of this, however, he was convinced, that the middle classes would have to work out their own salvation. "From them must come the demand for the satisfaction of a want that is theirs." The aristocracy could not be expected to offer them help. "Why should they create competitors for their own children? Why should they labour to endow another class with those great instruments of power — a public spirit, a free spirit, a high spirit, a governing spirit?"

The impressive words in which Arnold attempted to gauge the consequences of continued disregard of this branch of public education will seem to many persons, by no means habitually pessimistic in their social outlook, as applicable as ever. Happily several lustra yet remain to us before the prophecy will run out of date:

"The course taken in the next fifty years by the middle classes of this nation will probably give a decisive turn to its history. If they will not seek the alliance of the State for their own elevation, if they go on exaggerating their spirit of individualism, if they

persist in their jealousy of all governmental action, if they cannot learn that the antipathies and the shibboleths of a past age are now an anachronism for them, — that will not prevent them, probably, from getting the rule of their own country for a season, but they will certainly Americanise it. They will rule it by their energy, but they will deteriorate it by their low ideals and want of culture. In the decline of the aristocratical element, which in some sort supplied an ideal to ennoble the spirit of the nation and to keep it together, there will be no other element present to perform this service. It is of itself a serious calamity for a nation that its tone of feeling and grandeur of spirit should be lowered or dulled. But the calamity appears far more serious still when we consider that the middle classes, remaining as they are now, with their narrow, harsh, unintelligent, and unattractive spirit and culture, will almost certainly fail to mould or assimilate the masses below them, whose sympathies are at the present moment actually wider and more liberal than theirs. They arrive, these masses, eager to enter into possession of the world, to gain a more vivid sense of their own life and activity. In this their irrepressible development, their natural educators and initiators are those immediately above them, the middle classes. If these classes cannot win their sympathy or give them their direction, society is in danger of falling into anarchy."

The urgency with which Arnold advocated State action, and his concern to convince his countrymen of its

wisdom, will appear strange to readers in the present day unless they bear in mind the strong hold which the voluntary principle then enjoyed, and amongst no section of the community so much as the middle class and the Nonconformists. The world has moved apace since the late Mr. Edward Miall early in the 'sixties wrote the following defence of middle-class education. Yet it is interesting as presenting the old argument for voluntaryism in its barrenest and woodenest form, and at the same time as affording a glimpse, which may well make one shudder, at the Philistinism which Arnold so resolutely combated:

"Middle-class education seems to be the favourite topic of the hour, and we must confess to a feeling of shame at the nonsense which is being uttered on the subject. It might be thought, from what is said, that this section of the community, which has done everything else so well—which has astonished the world by its energy, enterprise, and self-reliance, which is continually striking out new paths of industry and subduing the forces of nature—cannot, from some mysterious reason, get their children properly educated."

And in order to understand how vehement was the opposition which the State action which Arnold then advocated encountered in political circles, let the following typical protest from the *Daily News* of 1866 serve us: "All the world knows that the great middle class of this country supplies the mind, the will, and the power for all the great and good things that have

to be done, and it is not likely that that class should surrender its powers and privileges in the one case of the training of its own children. How the idea of such a scheme can have occurred to anybody, how it can have been imagined that parents and schoolmasters in the most independent, and active, and enlightened class of English society, how it can have been supposed that the class which has done all the great things that have been done in all departments, will beg the Government to send inspectors through its schools, when it can itself command whatever advantages exist, might seem unintelligible but for two or three considerations."

Unhappily for the middle class it did not surrender its "powers and privileges" in regard to "the training of its own children," and the result is that this class continues still on the whole to be, as Arnold then deplored, "among the worst educated in the world." But fifty, forty, and even thirty years ago it was necessary to create not merely the instinct for education, but the instinct for State action in any sphere of national life whatever. The latter instinct, since its strength is derived less from the dynamic than the static influences in human nature, has since been developed far beyond the expectation of any whose memories go back to the dreary controversies of the later era of individualism; though whether as the result of the development of a genuine State consciousness and of a reasoned conviction of the efficacy of reliance upon the State, is an open question; the other alternative, that it is a result

of enfeebled national fibre and intellectual indolence, is at least an arguable contention. But that the instinct for education remains yet to be cultivated no one will doubt.[1] Recalling facts of ancient history like these, we can the better appreciate the force of that eloquent peroration with which his essay on *A French Eton* ends, a passage marked by the true dignity of written rhetoric.

"Children of the future," he says, "whose day has not yet dawned, you, when that day arrives, will hardly believe what obstructions were long suffered to prevent its coming! You who, with all your faults, have neither the aridity of aristocracies, nor the narrow-mindedness of middle classes, you, whose power of simple enthusiasm is your great gift, will not comprehend how progress towards man's best perfection—the adorning and ennobling of his spirit — should have been reluctantly undertaken; how it should have been for years and years retarded by barren commonplaces, by worn-out clap-traps. You will wonder at the labour of its friends

[1] While writing, the following appears in a London journal: "The Metropolitan Board Teachers' Association has passed the following resolution: 'This Association regrets that it has been considered necessary to introduce dancing and other forms of amusement into the evening continuation schools in order to increase the attendance, and it respectfully urges the Board to discontinue the practice.'" (January 18, 1903.) With such a fact compare the sight of eager lads trooping of their own free will to the continuation schools of a German town on Sunday morning, after church and a hard week's work, which only ended late the previous evening!

in proving the self-proving ; you will know nothing of the doubts, the fears, the prejudices they had to dispel ; nothing of the outcry they had to encounter ; of the fierce protestations of life from policies which were dead and did not know it, and the shrill, querulous upbraiding from publicists in their dotage. But you, in your turn, with difficulties of your own, will then be mounting some new step in the arduous ladder whereby man climbs towards his perfection ; towards that unattainable but irresistible lode-star, gazed after with earnest longing, and invoked with bitter tears ; the longing of thousands of hearts, the tears of many generations."

Arnold did, indeed, live to see a beginning made in the reform of secondary education, but it was only a beginning, for it must be confessed with humiliation that the impetus created by the Public Schools Commission of 1861 and the Taunton (Grammar Schools) Commission of 1864 did not carry the movement far. Of a number of excellent recommendations contained in the report of the later Commission only the weakest and least effectual were incorporated in the Endowed Schools Act of 1869, and though under that Act a host of secondary schools have been reorganised, the reform of middle-class education remains an uncompleted political task — one of those tasks which will make or mar the reputations of the statesmen courageous enough to take them in hand.

The difficulty of inducing the middle class to acknowledge, against their will, that education was a

good and needful thing sorely tried Arnold's patience no less than his faith in the common sense of his countrymen. It is pathetic to observe how he clutched at every indication of progress, however faint, and tried to draw from it consolation and encouragement. "I think I am gradually making an impression about public secondary education," we find him writing on January 16, 1879, when he had been at the work just twenty years. There was at last movement, if only at the glacier's pace! "This reform interests me," he continues, ardent as ever, "as the first practicable of those great democratic reforms to which we must, I believe, one day come. And they call me a bad Liberal, or no Liberal at all!"

The later history of middle-class education is an illustration of the propensity of mankind for snubbing its prophets when it does not slay them: and often to be snubbed is worse than to be slain. The last word of the State upon the subject is that it has neither time nor inclination to do anything itself as yet, but meantime the provincial governing authorities may if they like. Were Arnold to return to the flesh, the first thing he would do, after asking after the welfare of the Barbarians, would be to inquire the way to the nearest Royal School for the Sons of Philistines, and as likely as not he would receive a shake of the head and be referred to the address of Dr. Silverpump and Lycurgus House Academy.

II

RELIGION

CHAPTER VI

THE CRITIC OF DOGMA

TO Matthew Arnold's theological writings I come, candidly, with but a mitigated sympathy, believing them to be on the whole the least necessary and the least serviceable part of his literary work, though, like the rest, they are stamped throughout by the mind and character of the man. And yet, while these writings failed entirely to achieve the purposes for which they were immediately undertaken, and while the purposes themselves seem to have acquired in Arnold's mind an importance and an urgency which it is nowadays difficult to appreciate, the reservation is due that much of his religious speculation possesses considerable incidental value, especially for an age characterised by increasing discrimination in matters of dogmatic authority and belief. This fact alone would justify a careful examination both of his positive and negative views.

At first sight it might seem incongruous that a man of his fine intellectual temper should have left the pathway of pure letters in order to range, as a protagonist

of rationalist criticism, a field of thought which of all others incites to the keenest disputation and yields the most inconclusive results. His letters even more than the sequence of his books prove that he entered literary life with no prepossession in favour of theological controversy. Nor was there anything in the circumstances of his upbringing to prejudice him against the acceptance of the current order of religious beliefs. With all his broad-mindedness, Arnold of Rugby, his father, lived and died an orthodox believer, if one dare without indignity apply to a man of his brilliant parts and of his lofty spirit a term so often abused in the service of uninspiring nescience and insipid spiritual content. Not only so, but his orthodoxy, the orthodoxy of a generous mind which recognised the subjectivity of its own formulæ and never sought to test the faith of others by their doubts, was by none respected more genuinely than by his unorthodox son. And if, as has been suggested, there was a lack of intellectual sympathy between the two, it is not likely that the reason lay in the projected shadow of a religious estrangement. Dr. Arnold died in 1842, when Matthew was but twenty years old, and one may doubt whether the later critic of prevalent dogmas then saw quite clearly the distance which independent thought would take him from the parental moorings. For the rest, every one of Arnold's references to his father indicates that between them a relationship of exceptional cordiality and tenderness subsisted. The beautiful poem, *Rugby Chapel, November*,

1857, was a spontaneous tribute of filial love as well as of filial piety and admiration.

> O strong soul, by what shore
> Tarriest thou now? For that force,
> Surely, has not been left vain!
> Somewhere, surely, afar,
> In the sounding labour-house vast
> Of being is practised that strength,
> Zealous, beneficent, firm!
>
> . . . Through thee I believe
> In the noble and great who are gone;
> Pure souls honour'd and blest
> By former ages, who else—
> Such, so soulless, so poor,
> Is the race of men whom I see—
> Seem'd but a dream of the heart,
> Seem'd but a cry of desire.
> Yes! I believe that there lived
> Others like thee in the past,
> Not like the men of the crowd
> Who all around me to-day
> Bluster or cringe, and make life
> Hideous, and arid, and vile;
> But souls temper'd with fire,
> Fervent, heroic, and good,
> Helpers and friends of mankind.

One dare even venture the supposition that if Arnold, in spite of his departure from orthodox belief, kept under control every tendency to extravagance, and rendered to the last a firm, unswerving, and absolutely genuine attachment to the Church of England, sincerely convinced that her credentials were as right as her dogmas were wrong, it was not more due to culture, moderating though its influence always is, than

to the impressions which he carried into life from the Rugby home.

How profoundly religious he really was, how his nature aspired to reach altitudes of faith of which reason sternly forbade the ascent as inaccessible, might be most conclusively proved by his poems, were it fair and safe to judge his deliberate convictions upon the deeper concerns of life by these utterances. That, however, would be unwarrantable, and indeed, he himself vigorously protested when inquisitive persons read into his poems opinions which he did not expressly avow: "Mr. Arnold here professes his Pantheism," or "Mr. Arnold here disowns Christianity."[1] When the prose and poetry of any writer betray conflict in sentiment, it is clearly the prose which must have the benefit of the doubt. In Arnold's prose we have for a certainty the religious conceptions which he accepted as incontestable, those to which he felt justified in binding himself, and it is surely fitting that they should be so expressed, in a vehicle whose special commendation it is that it lends itself unreadily to the play of imagination. Yet however admirably suited poetry is, on the other hand, to express the vaguer religious intuitions and aspirations, to reflect the emotional rather than the rational side of nature, nevertheless the many striking passages in his poetical writings which suggest a mind which on this question was re-

[1] Letter of November 16, 1867. He had the poems *Empedocles* and *Obermann* chiefly in mind.

mote from scepticism, can only with propriety be interpreted as indicating the scheme of religious belief which he would have regarded as theoretically desirable, that which would have best satisfied him, had reason not stood in the way. To use one of his own phrases, the thoughts so expressed were "thrown out" at objects of consciousness which reason cannot fully grasp, yet which in himself as in others inspired the profoundest emotion.

It is the easiest and also the most probable theory that the causes which disposed him in religion to go his own way were more personal than any accidents of his surroundings, and lay, in fact, in characteristics of his nature, an exceeding subtlety of mind, a keen critical spirit, and not less a passionate love of truth. These made interrogation intellectually necessary, and doubt not difficult, when the matters at issue were matters whose certitude does not admit of positive demonstration. In one of his letters (March 3, 1865) he reveals himself very clearly when he writes: "No one has a stronger and more abiding sense than I have of the 'dæmonic' element — as Goethe called it — which underlies and encompasses our life; but I think, as Goethe thought, that the right thing is, while conscious of this element, and of all that there is inexplicable round one, to keep pushing on one's posts into the darkness, and to establish no post that is not perfectly in light and firm. One gains nothing in the darkness by being, like Shelley, as incoherent as the

darkness itself." So likewise in one of his earliest essays he says: "We should part with our illusions; we should know the truth." And again: "Time has no indulgence; any veils of illusion which we may have left around an object because we loved it, Time is sure to strip away."

The man who thus thought, who set before himself such ideals, who before all else revered truth—"the mysterious goddess whom we shall never see except in outline"—was not the man to accept the beliefs which he found current without first requiring them to justify their claim to rule his mind. For him it was inevitable that sooner or later that trying crisis in intellectual experience would come when the entire attitude towards traditional opinions undergoes revision and change—a crisis making call upon a man for so much conviction, upon his friends for so much charity. The revision and the change—though, indeed, it was a complete transformation—had already taken place when, at the beginning of the 'seventies, Arnold as a writer first touched religious questions directly. Henceforth, whatever the subject upon which he wrote or spoke, to one or other of the eternally fascinating problems of religion he came. The encounter, nevertheless, was not yet one at close quarters, and probably he himself had no idea of the command which this species of controversy was to assert over his mind and his pen, or of the extreme consequences to which logic and native honesty would carry him.

There were not wanting outside influences to encourage him in the course which he adopted, and a brief survey of some of these will more clearly define the intellectual background from which Matthew Arnold as a critic of traditional dogma emerged. The demands of orthodoxy had long been felt to be too imperious and despotic by most educated men of independent judgment, above all by those who had inhaled the fresh if intoxicating breath of an emancipated criticism which had come from abroad, and signs were accumulating of a certain widespread spirit of revolt. Yet the revolt, such as it was, was a revolt not against religion but against theology: it might even be said less against theology as a science than against the unscientific spirit which, in a scientific age, still perpetuated the irrational traditions of an unenlightened past.

The unsettlement of the time can best be illustrated by recalling several episodes which still serve as landmarks of the progress of theological thought in England. The middle of the century saw Tractarianism still a profoundly moving force; the Tracts had ceased, but the movement went on. Nominally designed to stimulate the Church's spiritual energies, to resuscitate her authority and to make more real and secure her position in the life of the nation, the Tractarian movement, with which will always be associated three great names, Keble, Newman, and Pusey, when all other notable adherents are forgotten, was none the

less intended to counteract the liberal tendencies which were more and more asserting themselves. Hence the emphasis which was laid upon the custom and tradition of the Church, upon a narrow conception of her sacraments, upon rigid conformity in matters of order and doctrine: hence, too, the inevitable disposition to oppose progressive innovations by a backward movement in the direction of Catholic usage. The sacerdotal idea was elevated into a dogma, confession was enjoined in theory and encouraged in practice, and an almost pontifical conception of Church discipline was advocated. Thus, as Professor Otto Pfleiderer [1] says, "While to all appearances the object was only to restore historical Anglicanism in its original purity, in reality the tendency to Catholicism was so decided that Anglicanism was from the very first left a long way behind, and the nature of the movement, as could be foreseen, must be Romanising."

Opposed to Tractarianism was the Broad Church movement, which had powerful advocates in men like Dr. Arnold, Dean Stanley, Hampden, Milman, Benjamin Jowett, and, in the days of his warmer enthusiasm, Frederick Denison Maurice. While the Tractarians sought to avert trouble to the Church by abandoning the principles of the Reformation and returning to Catholic dogma and ritual, Thomas Arnold saw safety only in the greater liberalisation of the Church. The Tractarians would have narrowed the Church to a sect,

[1] *The Development of Theology.*

Arnold sought to broaden it and to make it more and more commensurate with the nation. It was his desire that it should be as easy as possible for Nonconformists to re-enter the Church; hence all the test he sought to impose was a general acceptance of such of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity as constituted the common basis of Anglicanism and Nonconformity. That minimum requirement complied with, he would have allowed the utmost latitude of belief alike in regard to dogma, ritual, and Church order. But Arnold's wide-hearted religious and ecclesiastical conceptions were in advance of his times, and to the High Church party they were unreservedly obnoxious. He died without having realised any of his ideals of Church reform, yet his influence upon the thought of his day was none the less fruitful, and it may be traced still more plainly in the theological movement of the second half of the century.

"It is Thomas Arnold, if any one," writes Pfleiderer, "who must be regarded as the pioneer of free theology in England. . . . Arnold was the first to show to his countrymen the possibility, and to make the demand, that the Bible should be read with honest human eyes without the spectacles of orthodox dogmatic presuppositions, and that it can at the same time be revered with Christian piety and made truly productive in moral life. He was the first who dared to leave on one side the traditional phraseology of the High Churchmen and the Evangelicals, and to look upon

Christianity, not as a sacred treasure of the Churches and sects, but as a Divine beneficent power for every believer; not as a dead heritage from the past, but as a living spiritual power for the moral advancement of individuals and nations in the present . . . He showed how classical and general historical studies may be pursued in the light of the moral ideas of Christianity, and how, on the other hand, a free and clear way of looking at things may be obtained by means of wide historical knowledge, and then applied to the interpretation of the Bible and the solution of current ecclesiastical questions. Thus he began to pull down the wall of separation which had cut off the religious life of his fellow-countrymen, with their sects and churches and rigid theological formulas and usages, from the general life and pursuits of the nation."

Apart from these two movements, offering, the one a positive, the other a negative, testimony to the ferment which was perturbing the hitherto serene surface of English theological thought, there were evidences of movement more strictly literary in character. In the recently published *Life* of Professor Max Müller occurs a passing reference to the temper which prevailed at Oxford early in the 'sixties. "Here in Oxford," he writes to a friend at that time, "everlasting quarrels and squabbles, and lies and slander, and nowhere courage and faith, and no one can speak the truth, and any one who tries to do it brings a perfect hornet's nest

about his ears. Can you believe that they have refused an excellent Orientalist, Dr. W. Wright, for the place of Under-Librarian at the Bodleian, because he has dared to affirm that the language of the Phœnician inscriptions is Semitic and not Hamitic, because he doubts that Ham was the father of the Canaanites and denies that Moses wrote the account of his own death? The man is a thorough Christian, is ready to sign the Articles; but it is no good—away with him! And no one moves a finger. 'Peace at any price!' is the watchword."

It was bad enough in that "home of lost causes and forsaken beliefs and unpopular names and impossible loyalties," but it was not quite so bad as that; for it was Oxford men pre-eminently who in 1860 published the famous *Essays and Reviews*. Few English theological works have shared so much popularity and so much obloquy as the sturdy little volume of collected papers whose aim it was, by probing current thought in many places simultaneously, to compel the Church to affirm whether she were yet prepared to investigate theological problems herself, or to allow others to do so for her, in the scientific spirit of independence and open-mindedness. The answer she gave was not encouraging. The High Church party and the Evangelicals forgot their radical differences for the moment as they joined hands in a resolute endeavour to suppress the bold speculators who had dared to be honest with themselves and to respect the truth. In the heresy

prosecution which was instituted against the Reviewers it was thought a heavy indictment enough to plead that, whatever their intentions might have been, the tendency of their speculations — and especially of Dr. Rowland Williams's examination of Bunsen's *Biblical Researches*, which formed the second essay of the series — must inevitably be to encourage disbelief in the Divine inspiration and authority of Scripture. The prosecution ended, of course, in the rejection of the suit, and liberal theology gained the second of three historical victories which fell to it within a generation over the obscurantist tendencies of the time. The first was the unsuccessful Arian heresy suit brought against R. D. Hampden in 1833, and the third the failure of the South African bishops to deprive Bishop Colenso of his Natal see in 1865 because of his unorthodox views touching the date and authorship of the Pentateuch.

It is noteworthy that while the orthodox Dr. Arnold warmly defended Hampden, his unorthodox son opposed Colenso, to whom, in a vigorous article published in *Macmillan's Magazine*, he attributed a reprehensible disregard of the religious susceptibilities of the popular mind, a criticism destined before long to rebound upon its author. And yet ten years before this Arnold had incurred the remonstrances of the critics of his family for applauding Miss Martineau's frank avowal of agnosticism in the poem *Haworth Churchyard, April, 1855*, with its

Hail to the steadfast soul,
Which, unflinching and keen,
Wrought to erase from its depth
Mist and illusion and fear!
Hail to the spirit which dared
Trust its own thoughts, before yet
Echoed her back by the crowd!
Hail to the courage which gave
Voice to its creed, ere the creed
Won consecration from time!

In a letter to his mother (of May, 1855) he defends this eulogy, though disclaiming any sympathy with Miss Martineau's speculations. What appealed to him was her courage. "The want of independence of mind — shutting their eyes and professing to believe what they do not,—running blindly together in herds, for fear of some obscure danger and horror if they go alone,—is so eminently a vice of the English, I think, of the last hundred years — has led them and is leading them into such scrapes and bewilderment, that I cannot but praise a person whose one effort seems to have been to deal perfectly honestly and sincerely with herself."[1] After all, was not all this true of Colenso?

Judging *Essays and Reviews* so long after the event, one's uppermost thought is that the commotion it created was entirely out of proportion to the character of its propositions. Yet if these, after all, seem nowadays so thoroughly sensible and matter-of-fact, so

[1] In a letter of March 11, 1877, Arnold recants much of this approbation: "I do not want to overpraise a personage so antipathetic to me as H. M.," etc.

irreproachably decorous and safe, that they should conciliate even the most wary of thinkers, it must be remembered that forty years ago the English religious public was only beginning to recognise the results of the critical and exegetical works of foreign and especially of German theologians, so that that which abroad was a commonplace was here a dangerous innovation. Viewed in their relativity to the retarded thought then current, many of the theories advanced in *Essays and Reviews* marked a wonderful advance. And even Matthew Arnold held serious reservations as to the method which the Essayists and Reviewers adopted for popularising a freer and sounder interpretation of religious truth, fully though he recognised the necessity for a bold advance. "As to the Essays," he wrote March 14, 1861, "one has the word of Scripture for it that 'new wine should be put into new bottles,' and certainly the wine of the Essays is rather new and fermenting for the old bottles of Anglicanism. Still, the tendency in England is so strong to admit novelties only through the channel of some old form that perhaps it is in this way that religion in England is destined to renew itself, and the best of the Essayists may have some anticipation of this, and accept their false position with patience in this confidence."

In passing, it is significant of the moderation of English scientific thought that during the *Essays and Reviews* controversy Dr. Temple, who on his preferment to Exeter withdrew his essay (on *The Education of the*

World) from circulation, received an address of sympathy signed by a number of leading representatives of science, who "without committing themselves to the conclusions arrived at in the various essays," expressed their "sense of the value which is to be attached to inquiries conducted in a spirit so earnest and reverential, and our belief that such inquiries would tend to elicit truth and to foster a spirit of sound religion." Yet now, after forty years have passed, it still requires an effort to conceive of a eulogium even so guarded as this being addressed conversely by the theological to the scientific investigator. It is not without reason that Professor Pfleiderer, most discriminating of foreign critics, notes "the remarkable fact that the Church life of England until within the last decade (1880–1890) has remained almost completely untouched by the vast progress of the scientific thought of the educated classes, and that wherever the two come into contact such a violent collision is the consequence that popular feeling is shocked and not a few despair of the possibility of any mutual understanding."

While thus within the Church there was progress towards the light, if halting, slow, and spasmodic, the attitude of the cultivated laity was shown by works like Professor Seeley's *Ecce Homo*, which appeared in 1866, and still more by the earlier works of Francis William Newman (brother of the Cardinal), published between 1849 and 1858, in which the orthodox interpretation of Scripture is rejected while religion itself is

enforced as an eternal need of the soul, and an appeal is made for the reconciliation of reason and faith. Carlyle, too, though he affected no system of thought, was accustoming the select public which he had created for himself to a freer exercise of the critical faculty in the treatment of religious conceptions; while the fine moral earnestness with which an outspoken rationalist like John Stuart Mill advocated his views compelled respectful attention even where they did not command assent.[1]

[1] Mill, as is well known, modified his views in later life. "Brought up from the first without any religious beliefs in the ordinary acceptation of the term," as he writes in his *Autobiography* (p. 38), his last words proved yet his most positive, for the "Essay on Theism," in his posthumous "Essays on Religion" (*Nature, the Utility of Religion and Theism*) shows him again on speaking terms with some of the orthodox views which he had rejected in earlier utterances. "Appearances point," he writes in the chapter on Immortality, "to the existence of a Being who has great power over us—all the power implied in the creation of the Kosmos, or of its organised beings at least—and of whose goodness we have evidence, though not of its being his predominant attribute; and as we do not know the limits either of his power or of his goodness, there is room for hope that both the one and the other may extend to granting us this gift [immortality], provided that it would really be beneficial to us." And, again: "To the conception of the rational sceptic it remains a possibility that Christ actually was what he supposed himself to be—not God, for he never made the smallest pretension to that character—but a man charged with a special, express, and uniqne commission from God to lead mankind to truth and virtue." Hence the point of Dr. A. Bain's lament (*John Stuart Mill: A Criticism*, p. 133): "The posthumous 'Essays on Religion' do not correspond with what we should have expected from him on that subject."

With the prevalent dissatisfaction Arnold was in complete accord, yet to him it suggested dangerous possibilities, and the chief danger was lest in putting away the extravagances of religion modern scepticism should forsake religion altogether. Recognising in religion "that voice of the deepest human experience," "the greatest and most important of the efforts by which the human race has manifested its impulse to perfect itself," [1] he feared lest its sanctions should be weakened by any questioning, however necessary and inevitable, of the data of belief. That, meantime, his own mission and the way of discharging it had become clear may be gathered from a letter written to his sister in December, 1859. Visiting Paris on school inspection work, he met Ernest Renan, of whom he says: "I thought the other day that I would tell you of a Frenchman whom I saw in Paris, Ernest Renan, between whose line of endeavour and my own I imagine there is considerable resemblance, that you might have a look at some of his books if you liked. The difference is, perhaps, that he tends to inculcate *morality*, in a high sense of the word, upon the French nation as what they most want, while I tend to inculcate *intelligence*, also in a high sense of the word, upon the English nation as what they most want; but with respect both to morality and intelligence I think we are singularly at one in our ideas, and also with respect both to the progress and the established religion of the

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, chapter i.

present day. The best book of his for you to read, in all ways, is his *Essais de Morale et de Critique*, lately published."

A passage in the Preface to the work so commended might stand as a description of Arnold's own position, and has indeed many counterparts in his later writings:

"Loin que j'aie jamais songer à diminuer en ce monde la somme de religion qui y reste encore, mon but, en tous mes écrits, a été bien au contraire d'épurer et de ranimer un sentiment qui n'a quelque chance de conserver son empire qu'en prenant un nouveau degré de raffinement. La religion de nos jours ne peut plus se séparer de la délicatesse de l'âme et de la culture de l'esprit. J'ai cru la servir en essayant de la transporter dans la région de l'inattaquable, au delà des dogmes particuliers et des croyances surnaturelles."

The task which Arnold likewise undertook was to determine the essential and abiding elements of religion as unaided reason recognised and accepted them, to place these "dans la région de l'inattaquable," and to do this in the interest not merely of religion but of Christianity itself.

CHAPTER VII

THE GOD-IDEA OF THE HEBREWS

AND here, too, Arnold's master-key is culture. His criticism aims simply at discovering how culture, when left to go its own way, unforced, unprejudiced, unimpeded, will view religion and the problems which religion involves. It was his conviction that the failure of theologians to study religion by the method of culture was largely responsible for the prevalent divorce between reason and faith. A broad literary criticism could alone remove the difficulties which literary misapprehension had created. Yet lest any one should think lightly of the instrument which he brings to his aid, he points out that literary criticism means much more than verbal quibbling about verbal obscurities, and that the light which he seeks is not merely that which a universal knowledge of books throws upon the chief of books.

"This literary criticism," he says, "calls into play the highest requisites for the study of letters; great and wide acquaintance with the history of the human mind, knowledge of the manner in which men have

thought, of their way of using words and of what they mean by them, delicacy of perception and quick tact, and besides all these a favourable moment and the *Zeitgeist*." [1]

To the *Zeitgeist* and Arnold's ponderous veneration for it a word must be devoted in passing, and perhaps more conveniently here than later. The feeling which Arnold entertained for the Time-Spirit bordered on awe. Its power and authority nothing and no one can withstand; neither miracle nor superstition of any kind; before it the hoariest systems of thought crumble and decay; it is an unfailing revealer of the bubble reputation. Butler's *Analogy* has enjoyed the profound respect of many generations, but even that "great work, on which such immense praise has been lavished," is vulnerable: "It seemed once to have a spell and a power; but the *Zeitgeist* breathes upon it and we rub our eyes, and it has the spell and the power no longer." [2] The *Zeitgeist* was to Arnold, in fact, a fetish, a talisman, a thaumaturgy,—the only one which he recognised,—and to it he attributed a more wonderful influence upon the human mind than was ever exercised by the special supernaturalism against which he contended. Here for once his superiority to the common credulity of our weak nature failed him.

It has been counted little short of presumption in Arnold that he, a layman, with no special training in

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, chapter vi.

[2] *Last Essays:* Essay on "Bishop Butler and the Zeitgeist," ii.

theological scholastic, should have essayed a task so ambitious as this. And almost it might appear as though he had long before by anticipation denied his own competency to interfere in controversy of the kind. For the gravamen of his case against Bishop Colenso was expressed in the sentence: "Let us have all the science there is from the men of science, from the men of religion let us have religion." But whether Arnold was right or wrong in refusing free speech to Colenso, these words cannot reasonably be construed in a negative sense as implying that the man who is neither a professed scientist nor a professed theologian, however high his qualifications may otherwise be, shall necessarily hold no opinions at all, or at least shall not utter them, touching either of these branches of knowledge. Such a contention would be just as sensible as the claim that no man should judge poetry unless he could write verse, music unless he were a composer, or fiction unless he had produced novels of his own. A theologian Arnold was not and did not pretend to be, but then his purpose in writing was not specifically theological either. He was willing to believe that of theology the world already had enough, and that less rather than more would be an improvement; all that he presumed to do was to take the theological dogmas which had been deduced from the Bible and still enjoyed living currency, and submit them to such an investigation as fell to the province of a literary critic, which he did profess to be.

But, further, it is a fair claim that as a lay critic he possessed the advantage over the professed theologian that he was able to come to this investigation with a perfectly open mind—with no preconception to confirm, no thesis to establish, no dogma to defend; in a word, with nothing to prove. Freely and conclusively might illustrations be cited to show how much easier it is for the lay than the professional mind to grasp large spiritual conceptions. The boldest essays in the interpretation of religion, those breathing the most generous spirit, freest from exclusiveness and provinciality, and marked by the broadest synthesis of human experience, have come not from theologians and ecclesiasts, but from poets and philosophers, since these have ever been able to bring to the study of phenomena in themselves so absorbingly subjective the greatest degree of mental detachment and disinterestedness. Every one knows how much the milder and more tolerant judgment of Mohammedanism and other non-Christian religions professed amongst English people in recent days is due to the simple candour with which Carlyle brushed aside the idea of an exclusively Christian revelation as opposed to any large survey of human thought and of civilisation.

Arnold's attitude to other religions was no less sympathetic, and it is well expressed by that wide-hearted utterance in the poem *Progress*, an utterance marked by all the catholicity of Pope's *Universal Prayer*, while free from its vague impersonal rhetoric :

Children of men! the unseen Power, whose eye
  For ever doth accompany mankind,
Hath look'd on no religion scornfully
  That men did ever find.
Which has not taught weak wills how much they can?
  Which has not fall'n on the dry heart like rain?
Which has not cried to sunk, self-weary man:
  "Thou must be born again"?

And in general it would appear to be natural to the disinterested lay mind to view mankind as an indivisible whole, and its spiritual atmosphere, however various in density, as a common element, and to approach the problems of religion from this universal standpoint.[1]

Arnold's attitude and the movement of thought to

[1] In his work, *The Philosophy of the Christian Religion* (1902), Principal A. M. Fairbairn relates how it was a visit to India that convinced him that this was the only tenable position. "In India," he writes, "the author suddenly found himself face to face with a religion he had studied in its literature and by the help of interpreters of many minds and tongues, and this contact with reality at once illumined him and perplexed him. It was not so much that his knowledge was incorrect or false as that it was mistaken in its emphasis." So he came to the conclusion: "If great historical religions which innumerable millions of men, as rational as we, have professed through thousands of ages, be resolved into systems of error and delusion that only the blind deceitfulness of the human heart could tempt man to believe, then it is evident that we dare not use the reason or the conscience which we have so discredited either to believe or to attest or to justify the truth of our own. In other words, the philosophy that misreads the origin of religious ideas and the history of any religion will not, and indeed cannot, be just to the Christian; while he who would maintain the Christian must be just and even generous to all the religions created and professed of men." (See Preface, ix.)

which he sought to give impulse were not, from his own standpoint, intended to be aggressive. He complained, indeed, that "At present reformers in religion are far too negative, spending their labour, some of them, in inveighing against false beliefs which are doomed, others in contending about matters of discipline and ritual which are indifferent. Popular Christianity derived its power from the characters of certainty and of grandeur which it wore; these characters do belong to Christianity in its natural truth, and to show them there should be our object. This alone is really important. And shown they can be. Certainty and grandeur are really and truly characters of Christianity." [1] Leaving purely negative criticism to others, he aimed rather to construct a rational apologetic both for religion and for Christianity—to show their necessity, to represent them in such a form that they could not but commend themselves by their intrinsic reasonableness and obviousness. He desired to sift from the whole body of religious teaching the "natural truth of Christianity," holding that after this the hearts of men were sincerely feeling, and that to establish it would be to satisfy their need. It was no interest of his to "contend with the enemies and deniers of Christianity and to convince them of their errors," but he was sincerely attracted by the hope of "reassuring those who feel attachment to the Bible, but who recognise the growing discredit befalling

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, Preface to Popular Edition.

miracles and the supernatural. Such persons are to be reassured, not by disguising or extenuating the discredit which has befallen miracles and the supernatural, but by insisting on the natural truth of Christianity." He aspired to be, in fact, though in another way, what he has said that Emerson was—"the friend and aider of those who live in the spirit."

The work in which Arnold's religious views were first stated with fulness is *Literature and Dogma* (1873). It formed the second leaf of a triptych in which he wrote down the whole law of the religious life as he knew it: *St. Paul and Protestantism* (1870) and *God and the Bible* (1875) were the complementary pieces. From the first two only of these books are illustrative passages taken for the purpose of the present chapter.

The premise with which he starts is sufficiently sweeping to clear the ground: "The assumption with which all the churches and sects set out—that there is 'a great Personal First Cause, the moral and intelligent governor of the universe,' and that from Him the Bible derives its authority—cannot, at present at any rate, be verified." [1]

What, then, can be verified? To discover that is his problem—"to find for the Bible, for Christianity, for our religion, a basis in something which can be verified, instead of in something which has to be assumed." He tells us that if we would learn this we must first of

[1] Original Preface to *Literature and Dogma*.

all dismiss the idea of finding science and metaphysics in the Bible. They are not there, and to study the Bible with the scientific and metaphysical temper is to court futility and failure; for the hidden secrets will not be given up. Literary criticism is the only sure guide. Hence "To understand that the language of the Bible is fluid, passing, and literary, not rigid, fixed, and scientific, is the first step towards a right understanding of the Bible." Thus the word "God" must not be regarded as a term of science or of exact knowledge, but as "a term of poetry and eloquence, a term thrown out, so to speak, at a not fully developed object of the speaker's consciousness, a literary term, in short; and mankind mean different things by it as their consciousness differs."

What, however, was the vital thought which the idea of God conveyed to Israel's mind? In answering this question Arnold lays the foundation of his religion of experience. It was Israel's practical perception of the importance of righteousness which determined the character and content of his conception of God. Conduct, understood as righteousness, which makes three-fourths of life, is the special object of Old Testament (as later of New Testament) religion. Righteousness is, indeed, the master-word of the whole Bible, because it was the master-thought of the race which produced the Bible. The theologian endeavours to set up an antithesis between religion and ethics; such an antithesis Arnold holds to be false, yet he allows that be-

tween the two there is a difference in degree though not in kind.

"Religion, if we follow the intention of human thought and human language in the use of the word, is ethics heightened, enkindled, lit up by feeling; the passage from morality to religion is made when to morality is applied emotion. And the true meaning of religion is thus, not simply morality, but morality touched by emotion. And this new elevation and inspiration of morality is well marked by the word 'righteousness.' Conduct is the word of common life, morality is the word of philosophical disquisition, righteousness is the word of religion." [1]

But how comes emotion to be applied to morality? By just the same way that one gets to feel intensely about any matter whatever—"by dwelling upon it, by staying our thoughts upon it, by having it perpetually in our mind." People who spoke of righteousness as the Israelites did "could not but have had their minds long and deeply engaged with it; much more than the generality of mankind, who have, nevertheless, got as far as the notion of morals or conduct. And, if they were so deeply attentive to it, one thing could not fail to strike them. It is this: the very great part in righteousness which belongs, we may say, to *not ourselves*."

In this elusive phrase we have the second term in Arnold's definition of God. Righteousness was to

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, chapter i.

Israel the clearest and most real of conceptions. He saw that conduct made up the largest part of his nature and life, that by righteousness his happiness was infallibly conditioned, so that only by doing right did he obtain the consciousness of harmony and satisfaction. Yet he saw also that neither righteousness nor the impulse to righteousness was a creation of his own, and even that the impulse, once received, was not wholly under his control, but that both came from a power "not himself." Hence when the Hebrew people began to speak of the Eternal (Jehovah) they meant "the Eternal *righteous* who loveth righteousness."

"They had dwelt upon the thought of conduct, and of right and wrong, until the *not ourselves*, which is in us and all around us, became to them adorable eminently and altogether as *a power which makes for righteousness;* which makes for it unchangeably and eternally, and is therefore called *The Eternal.*"[1]

So when Israel says, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the *Eternal;* it is a good thing to sing praises unto our *God*," "*God*" or "*Eternal*" is here really, at bottom, "nothing but a deeply moved way of saying 'the power that makes for conduct or righteousness.' 'Trust in *God*,' is, in a deeply moved way of expression, the trust in the law of conduct; 'delight in the *Eternal*' is, in a deeply moved way of expression, the happiness we all feel to spring from conduct. Attending to conduct, to judgment, makes the attender

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, chapter i.

feel that it is joy to do it. Attending to it more still, makes him feel that it is the commandment of the Eternal, and that the joy got from it is joy from fulfilling the commandment of the Eternal. Thankfulness for this joy is the thankfulness to the Eternal; and to the Eternal, again, is due that further joy which comes from this thankfulness." [1]

Arnold does not ignore the fact that Israel personified the Eternal Power, but he explains the fact away: in so doing Israel spoke in the language of rhetoric and poetry; it was a term of convenience—he did not really mean it. He also associated with his Deity the attributes of fatherhood, but that, again, was "because the power in and around us, which makes for righteousness, is indeed best described by the name of this authoritative but yet tender and protecting relation."

Arnold himself, however, will not go beyond what to him seems absolutely incontrovertible and verifiable: "Let us put into their 'Eternal' and 'God' no more science than they did: *the enduring power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness.* They meant more by these names, but they meant this; and this they grasped fully."

Here, at last, is Arnold's ground of certitude, his impregnable rock of experience, and he compares it with the orthodox conceptions of religion to the latters' very serious prejudice.

"When people ask for our attention because of what

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, chapter i.

has passed, they say, 'in the Council of the Trinity,' and been promulgated, for our direction, by 'a Personal First Cause, the moral and intelligent governor of the universe,' it is certainly open to any man to refuse to hear them, on the plea that the very thing they start with they have no means of proving. . . . But . . . it is altogether different when people ask for our attention on the strength of this other first principle: 'To righteousness belongs happiness'; or this: 'There is an enduring power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness.' The more we meditate on this starting-ground of theirs, the more we shall find that there is solidity in it, and the more we shall be inclined to go along with them and to see what will come of it." [1]

And yet at righteousness Israel did not stop. He gained a further, a higher ideal—that of holiness. As righteousness is conduct heightened, so holiness is righteousness heightened, more complete, more possessing, awe-filled. But righteousness is the real germ of the God-idea. Poetry, tradition, superstition, metaphysical speculation without limit gathered round it as time passed on and the religious consciousness of mankind became less simple and less satisfied with elementary conceptions, but to Israel God was ever "the *not ourselves* which makes for righteousness." It is this underlying thought which constitutes the uniqueness of the Hebrew religion. Prodigies and

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, chapter ii.

marvels other religions possess in common with it; but the pre-eminent love of righteousness gives to it a distinction which has no parallel elsewhere.

"And as long as the world lasts all who want to make progress in righteousness will come to Israel for inspiration, as to the people who have had the sense for righteousness most glowing and strongest; and in hearing and reading the words Israel has uttered for us, carers for conduct will find a glow and a force which they could find nowhere else. As well imagine a man with a sense for sculpture not cultivating it by the help of the remains of Greek art, or a man with a sense for poetry not cultivating it by the help of Homer and Shakespeare, as a man with the sense for conduct not cultivating it by the help of the Bible! . . . This does truly constitute for Israel a most extraordinary distinction. In spite of all which in them and in their character is unattractive, nay, repellent,—in spite of their shortcomings even in righteousness itself and their insignificance in everything else,—this petty, unsuccessful, unamiable people, without politics, without science, without art, without charm, deserve their great place in the world's regard, and are likely to have it more, as the world goes on, rather than less. It is secured to them by the facts of human nature, and by the unalterable constitution of things." [1]

But it is evident that to represent the religion of the Hebrews as entirely experimental and free from all

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, chapter ii.

supernatural belief would be to ignore the clear light which literary criticism throws upon the inquirer's path. Arnold freely recognises this, but he pleads that the element of extra-belief, "belief beyond what can be proved," was alien to Israel's true conception of religion, and that Israel fell into it through error and moral laxity. The wonder-stories which occur in the historical books of the Old Testament he places on a level with those which attach to every primitive religion. On the other hand, the anthropomorphic idea of God was the result of the decay of the religious consciousness. The revelation of God as "the Eternal that makes for righteousness" was the revelation which, for the Hebrew race, breathed emotion into the laws of morality and made morality religion; "but it is evident that this revelation lost, as time went on, its nearness and clearness; and that for the mass of the Hebrews their God came to be a mere magnified and non-natural man, like the God of our popular religion now, who has commanded certain courses of conduct and attached certain sanctions to them." So, also, as Israel lost in moral balance, the realisation of the national idea of righteousness was projected into a future life, and that the more as the consciousness of immortality deepened. Upon this subject Arnold writes:

"That the spirit of man should entertain hopes and anticipations beyond what it actually knows and can verify is quite natural. Human life could not have

the scope, and depth, and progress it has, were this otherwise. It is natural, too, to make these hopes and anticipations give in their turn support to the simple and humble experience which was their original ground. Israel, therefore, who originally followed righteousness because he felt that it tended to life, might and did naturally come at last to follow it because it would enable him to stand before the Son of Man at His coming, and to share in the triumph of the saints of the Most High." [1]

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, chapter ii. To the same effect Arnold writes in the Preface to his *Last Essays:* "It is well known how imperfectly and amiss the Jewish nation conceived righteousness. And finally when their misconceived righteousness failed them in actual life, more and more they took refuge in imaginings about the future, and filled themselves with hopes of a kingdom of God, a resurrection, a judgment, an eternal life, bringing in and establishing for ever this misconceived righteousness of theirs."

CHAPTER VIII

NEW TESTAMENT DEVELOPMENTS

I

AND now it is necessary to take up the argument by which Arnold links the Old Testament with the New. The orthodox view is that the earlier Scripture foreshadows the later, that the prophetic "dispensation," though quite superseded by that which came with Jesus Christ, yet prepared for it the way, and so must be regarded as a necessary part of the Divine scheme for the redemption of humanity. Arnold accepts the orthodox view as a fact, but he places upon the fact his own interpretation. Most important for the understanding of this is his estimate of the figure of Christ and His meaning for mankind. He likewise regards Christ as the Messiah, the Anointed One, the world's Truth and Light. But He was not the Messiah upon whom the hopes of Israel centred, nor was the salvation which He offered that which orthodox Christianity has made the groundwork of faith in His person and gospel.

How came it that Israel's perception of righteousness

gradually lost in clearness and hence in its compelling power upon conduct? Arnold replies:

"Those courses of conduct which Israel's intuition of the Eternal had originally touched with emotion and made religion lay chiefly . . . in the line of national and social duties. . . . And national and social duties are peculiarly capable of a mechanical exterior performance, in which the heart has no share. One may observe rites and ceremonies, hate idolatry, abstain from murder and theft and false witness, and yet have one's inward thoughts bad, callous, and disordered. Then even the admitted duties themselves come to be ill-discharged or set at nought, because the emotion which was the only certain security for their good discharge is wanting." [1]

Hence the thing needed was that Israel should be thrown back upon his own mind, that to his religion should be imparted more feeling, more sincerity,—to use Arnold's favourite word, more "inwardness." To do justice, to discharge social duties, to abstain from outward irregularities of conduct, to observe a quite respectable passive, unemotional morality is possible without any genuine elevation of disposition or purity of heart. This had become the experience of Israel, and his restoration to the earlier and loftier ideal of righteousness was to come about by making religion a personal and individual rather than a social and collective service. The prophets of old had never pressed

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, chapter iii.

home with sufficient force this duty of inwardness, of personal application; Christ, however, did it and made it the burden of His gospel. The Pharisee, who lost sight of the true essentials of religion and righteousness in the mechanical discharge of perfunctory duties, He bade "cleanse first the inside of the cup that the outside may be clean also," and pointing to the zealots of the law, by way of warning rather than commendation, Christ told His disciples that unless their righteousness exceeded (or, were better than) theirs, it would not profit them. "Jesus Christ found Israel all astray, with an endless talk about God, the law, righteousness, the kingdom, everlasting life—and no real hold upon any one of them. Israel's old sure proof of being in the right way, his test which anybody could at once apply—the sanction of joy and peace—was plainly wanting." To a people which was "seething with inward unrest, irritation, and trouble," Christ brought the key to peace, joy, and blessedness.[1] Seizing the old master-idea of righteousness, He searched, sifted, renewed it, and gave it back

[1] The reader of the *Vie de Jésus* will remember Renan's description of the restlessness and discontent of the age in which Christ was born, but he finds the reasons to have been more political than theological or moral. "Jesus, as soon as he began to think, entered into the burning atmosphere which was created in Palestine by the ideas we have just stated. . . . Continual seditions, excited by the zealots of Mosaism, did not cease, in fact, to agitate Jerusalem during all this time. . . . Galilee was thus an immense furnace wherein the most diverse elements were seething," etc.

to Israel in a completely convincing, an incalculably inspiring form.

"Jesus made His followers first look within and examine themselves; He made them feel that they had a best and real self as opposed to their ordinary and apparent one, and that their happiness depended on saving this best self from being overborne. Then *to find his own soul*, his true and permanent self, became set up in man's view as his chief concern, as the secret of happiness; and so it really is. . . .

"And by recommending, and still more by Himself exemplifying in His own practice, by showing active in Himself, with the most prepossessing pureness, clearness, and beauty, the two qualities by which our ordinary self is indeed most essentially counteracted, *self-renouncement* and *mildness*, He made His followers feel that in these qualities lay the secret of their best selves; that to attain them was in the highest degree requisite and natural, and that a man's whole happiness depended upon it. . . .

"He put things in such a way that His hearer was led to take each rule or fact of conduct by its inward side, its effect on the heart and character; then the reason of the thing, the meaning of what had been mere matter of blind rule, flashed upon him. The hearer could distinguish between what was only ceremony and what was *conduct;* and the hardest rule of conduct came to appear to him infinitely reasonable and natural, and therefore infinitely prepossessing. A

return upon themselves, and a consequent intuition of the truth and reason of the matter of conduct in question, gave to men for right action the clearness, spirit, energy, happiness they had lost." [1]

So while the Old Testament said, "Attend to conduct!" Christ in the New said, "Attend first to the feelings and dispositions whence conduct proceeds!" In this way the idea of righteousness which had ever dominated the Hebrew spirit derived a new inspiration and furnished a new incentive. The devout Hebrew looked for the coming of a visible kingdom of God, wherein righteousness should dwell. Christ said, "Look for it within; when the inner man is transformed all is transformed."

Again and again, with that fondness—some would perhaps say weakness—for iteration which characterises him, Arnold speaks of the "method" and the "secret" of Jesus. The method we have seen: it is the method of inwardness, aiming at the transformation of conduct, that greater part of life;—"the setting up a great unceasing inward movement of attention and verification in matters which are three-fourths of life, where to see true and verify is not difficult,—the difficult thing is to care and attend. And the inducement to care and attend was because joy and peace, missed on every other line, were to be reached on this."

And the "secret" was the renunciation of self, that is, the old self, so that the new and true self might

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, chapter iii.

emerge and assert itself, renunciation by that *nekrosis* or dying of which St. Paul speaks as constituting "the word of the Cross." For Christ conceived the idea of two lives. One of them was "life properly so called, full of light, endurance, felicity, in connexion with the higher and permanent self; and the other life improperly so called, in connexion with the lower and transient self." It was this lower self which had to be "denied," or more truly "disowned," that by the breaking of its sway, in other words by its death, the true and higher self might come to light and to life.

Moreover, this method of inwardness and this secret of disownment Christ commended by a spirit of passing mildness and suavity, the mildness tempering the disposition in self-renouncement to be despotic and extravagant, while all three produced "a total impression ineffable and indescribable for the disciples, as also it was irresistible for them; but at which their descriptive words, words like this 'sweet reasonableness,' and like 'full of grace and truth,' are thrown out and aimed."

Yet Arnold claims that while Christ thus vitalised religion for His age, far from attempting to give to the idea of God a more precise, a more scientific definition, He took up the term just as Israel had used it. "If the substratum of real affirmation in the term was, with Israel, not the affirmation of 'a great Personal First Cause, the moral and intelligent Governor of the universe,' but the affirmation of 'an enduring Power, not

ourselves, that makes for righteousness,' so it remained with Jesus Christ likewise." [1]

"As with the word God so with the word Christ. Jesus did not give any scientific definition of it—such as, for instance, that Christ was the *Logos*. He took the word Christ as the Jews used it, as he took the word God as the Jews used it. And as he amended their notion of God, 'the Eternal who loveth righteousness,' by showing what righteousness really was, so he amended their notion of the Messiah, the chosen bringer of God's salvation, by showing what salvation really was." And salvation was, as we have seen, simply the transformation of the old self into a new, true, and higher self by the acceptance of Christ's method and secret—their acceptance, however, by no mere intellectual assent, but by the appropriation of Christ's spirit. "So the revelation of Jesus Christ in the New Testament is like the revelation of the God of Israel in the Old, in being the revelation of 'the Eternal not ourselves which makes for righteousness.' It is like it, and has the same power of religion in it." [2]

But here, again, extra-belief came in, and gathered in ever-growing accretion about the person of Christ, His character, and His mission. In course of time all sorts of supernatural attributes were ascribed to Him, until the attribute of humanity hardly remained at all; He was to pass away and come again in glory in the

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, chapter vii.
[2] *Ibid.*, chapter viii.

clouds, setting His apostles on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; and even His living followers were to be gathered up into the air with Him. So the simplicity of belief vanished; pious credulity added one wonder-story to another, until "The future and the miraculous engaged the chief attention of Christians, and in accordance with this strain of thought they more and more rested the proof of Christianity, not on its internal evidence, but on prophecy and miracle."

In his treatment of the Gospel miracles there is nothing peculiar to Arnold himself; the method is one which the unemotional critics of the German rationalist school and his own friend the elegant Renan had in common.[1] The result to which it led him was also the

[1] Of Renan's method of criticism Arnold writes, referring specially to the *Vie de Jésus*, in his essay on "The Function of Literary Criticism" (*Essays in Criticism*, 1st series): "M. Renan's attempt is for criticism of the most real interest and importance, since, with all its difficulty, a fresh synthesis of the New Testament data,—not a making war on them, in Voltaire's fashion, not a leaving them out of mind, in the world's fashion, but the putting a new construction upon them, the taking them from under the old, traditional, conventional point of view, and placing them under a new one—is the very essence of the religious problem, as now presented; and only by efforts in this direction can it receive a solution."

Of Strauss, on the other hand, he writes in his essay on "Spinoza and the Bible" in the same work: "Strauss has treated the question of Scripture miracles with an acuteness and fulness which even to the most informed minds is instructive; but because he treats it almost wholly without the power of edification, his fame as a serious writer is equivocal."

same, and it is nowhere more drastically stated than in the final Preface to *Literature and Dogma*, the Preface which ushered in a people's issue of that work: "Our popular religion at present conceives the birth, ministry, and death of Christ as altogether steeped in prodigy, brimful of miracle:—*and miracles do not happen.*"

Nothing could be more reasonable than the principle which, by way of preliminary, he lays down as a test by which to judge of the literal fallibility of Scripture: "One of the very best helps to prepare the way for valuing the Bible and believing in Jesus Christ is to convince oneself of the liability to mistake in the Bible writers." That several writers should record independent versions of the same events and utterances without substantial variations, and even contradictions, is unthinkable, while, on the other hand, their agreement would at once suggest the suspicion that all rested upon one source, in which event the matters recorded would lose in credibility. Now, not only do the synoptists contradict each other, but they go hopelessly astray in some of their statements, and the same applies to the authors of some of the Epistles. Arnold takes as an illustration the belief which prevailed in early Christian times in the imminent end of the world. That belief was a vivid reality for some of the New Testament writers—St. Paul, St. Peter, St. John, St. James. Christ was to descend from heaven, and first calling the faithful dead from their sleep He was with them and His still living disciples to pass victoriously

into the clouds. St. Matthew even makes Christ Himself predict the same thing. What conclusion must be drawn?

"Either," Arnold says, "the words were, like St. Paul's announcement, a mistake, or they are not really the very words Jesus said, just as He said them. That is, the reporters have given them a turn, however slight, a tone and a colour, a connexion, to make them comply with a fixed idea in their own minds, which they unfeignedly believed was a fixed idea with Jesus also."[1]

It is to be noticed also how constantly the endeavour is made by the Gospel writers to make prophecy square with completed fact, even to the extent of forcing the meaning of words. Arnold calls the endeavour "trifling," though without justification, since to the Evangelists it was unquestionably a duty of piety, engaged in with profound reverence, to fit the life and death of Christ into the prophetic framework which was prepared for Him. Yet this very piety and reverence inevitably led them to read their own eschatology into some of His words and deeds. As to this Arnold says: "It can hardly be gainsaid that to a delicate and penetrating criticism it has long been manifest that the chief *literal* fulfilment by Jesus Christ of things said by the prophets was the fulfilment such as would naturally be given by one who nourished his spirit on the prophets, and on living and acting their words."

But if the New Testament writers could err upon

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, chapter vi.

plain matters of fact, where the miraculous element did not come in, how easy to believe, bearing in mind the character of the men and of their time, that they could err and did err in importing so strong a thaumaturgic element into their narratives! For in the first place not only did Christ live in an age naturally prone to superstition, but it had been the traditional habit of His people to test the claims and sanctions of its prophets and leaders by their possession and ostentatious exercise of supernatural powers. Those who heard Him and those who wrote of Him lay thus under an instinctive compulsion to find His path beset on every side by manifestations of the miraculous, and so to make the acts of His daily life attest that supernatural conception of Him which popular imagination so early constructed for itself. No wonder, then, that thaumaturgical stories became current. But becoming current, they were sure to count on implicit belief. To miraculous aids and agencies the rude faith of such an age naturally resorted. Thus Christ's disciples, not less than His heterogeneous hearers, insisted on having "signs and wonders," and they saw them where they did not exist, for imagination was always ready to create them out of the most unsubstantial material.

Moreover, to increase the certainty that the reports which have come down of Christ's sayings and doings contain a mythical element, there is the further fact that the Gospels record the life of a unique spirit far beyond the comprehension of all his contemporaries.

"Jesus over the heads of all His reporters!—this idea," says Arnold, "is for us a constant guide in reading the Gospels." For, as there seen, He is "in the jargon of modern philosophy, an *absolute;* we cannot explain Him, cannot get behind Him and above Him, cannot command Him." Hence:

"To suppose that we have in our Gospels documents which can stand as the very original, strictly drawn up, strictly authenticated, and strictly preserved depositions of eye-witnesses, is absurd. They arose not in the sort of world where depositions are taken, nor in the sort of world where manuscripts are guarded. They arose, and they passed many years, in the immense, underground, obscure, fluctuating world of the common people. . . . Jesus was far over the heads of His reporters; He is not to be held responsible for their notions, or for all that they may make Him do or say. And the way in which our Gospels arose and grew up was such, that pressure upon the stock of data furnished by the original eye-witnesses and additions to this stock, and insertions, were extremely natural and extremely easy." [1]

One of Arnold's biographers complains that he should have presumed to distinguish between sayings attributed to Christ which are authenticated by intrinsic testimony and those which do not appear to be "in his manner." "It is not," remarks Professor Saintsbury, "as in some at least of the more risky

[1] *God and the Bible*, chapter vi., 8.

exercises of profane criticism in a similar field, as if we had some absolutely or almost absolutely authenticated documents, and others to judge them by. External evidence, except for the mere fact of Christ's existence and death, we have none. So you must, by the inner light, pick out of the very same documents, resting on the very same authority, what, according to your good pleasure, is 'in the manner of Jesus,' and then black-mark the rest as being not so." But than this method of criticism none could, in truth, be more legitimate and more permissible; nor, within its proper sphere, could any other take its place. It is true that such a criticism must not be employed by unscientific and undisciplined minds, but that is only to say that a workman must be presumed to understand the use of his tools. In untrained and inept hands, however, this process of sifting evidence ceases to be criticism at all. The same principle of exegesis has, in its application to the Old Testament, proved singularly fruitful in the elucidation of questions of authorship and chronology, and without its exercise that body of writings would still have been unintelligible. It consists in judging the individual and isolated utterance by the general tenor and tendency of the aggregate, and constitutes for letters that comparative method of criticism which has proved so fertile in other domains of inquiry. It is no doubt, as Professor Saintsbury says, the method of Higher Criticism, but it is at the same time literary criticism pure and simple.

The conclusion to which this method of judging the Gospel narratives brings Arnold, as it brought Strauss, Renan, and other far more revolutionary critics, is that the miracles there recorded did not really take place. He suggests no conscious deception; nay, intention to mislead being absent, there was properly no deception at all. The recorders believed all they wrote, yet for all that they were wrong, and their error had its origin in either ignorance or misapprehension. Advance scientific argument against miracles Arnold would not, and to the opponents who objected that he attempted no disproof, but simply took it for granted that they did not happen, he frankly rejoined, "Quite true, I admit it! To prove that miracles cannot happen might well be impossible; the real question is, do they happen?" And to this question he returns a very dogmatic negative. "That they do not happen—that what are called miracles are not what the believers in them fancy, but have a natural history of which we can follow the course—the slow action of experience more and more shows; and shows, too, that there is no exception to be made in favour of the Bible miracles."[1] But while admitting that so long as human nature is what it is "the mass of men are likely to listen more to a teacher of righteousness if he accompanies his teaching by an exhibition of supernatural prescience," he yet holds that Christianity risks too much in staking its truth and sanction upon the unprovable.

[1] *God and the Bible*, Conclusion.

"There is always a drawback to a man's advantage in [thus] treating, when he deals with religion and conduct, what is extra-belief and not certain as if it were matter of certainty, and in making it his ground of action. *He pays for it.* The time comes when he discovers that it is *not* certain; and then the whole certainty of religion seems discredited, and the basis of conduct gone." [1]

Yet even here, on ground so vulnerable, Arnold shows no disposition to deal harshly with popular religion, for he is certain that credulity of this kind will right itself. "Our point is that the objections to miracles do, and more and more will, without insistence, without attack, without controversy, make their own force felt; and that the sanction of Christianity, if Christianity is not to be lost along with its miracles, must be found elsewhere." And where must that sanction be found? Arnold answers—in Christ Himself, in His person, His word, His profound and eternal importance and necessity for mankind. Christ is His own witness—the witness of anything inferior to Himself derogates from, rather than enhances, His pre-eminence.

In passing, Arnold crosses a lance with those who, while unreservedly regarding all the Gospel miracles as genuine occurrences, however obscure the purpose and motive, just as readily reject all the recorded miracles which do not happen to fall in biblical history

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, chapter iv.

as foolish fables. Orthodox believers have no difficulty whatever in accepting the miracle of the turning of water into wine, but when St. Epiphanius, the Church Father of the fourth century, relates that "at each anniversary of the miracle of Cana, the water of the springs of Cibrya in Caria and Gerasa in Arabia was changed into wine, that he himself had drunk of the transformed water of Cibrya and his brother of that of Gerasa," even the most credulous of their number cries out, "Hold! Stop there! That goes too far!" Arnold rejoins, But why stop there,—why stop anywhere? Grant miraculous agency at all and it is unreasonable to impose any arbitrary limits to its operation. On mere grounds of external evidence he is prepared to concede to the miracles which take so prominent a place in Roman Catholic Church history a greater degree of probability than to those of the Gospel story, since in the former case the records are contemporary, they emanate from a less imaginative atmosphere and a less ignorant age, and a shorter interval having elapsed, there is less chance that perversions and incrustations have gathered round them. That the entire Protestant world does, nevertheless, agree to regard the miracles of Roman Catholicism as lying beyond the region even of faith shows that at heart mankind discredits the idea of an arbitrary disturbance of natural law, upon which miracle is assumed to rest. Meantime, Arnold advises Protestants to cultivate a suaver temper in their judgment of Catholic beliefs.

Taking as an illustration their common denunciation of the doctrine of transubstantiation as "a degrading superstition," he reminds them that it is after all only an extreme application of one of their own principles of Bible interpretation. "Once admit," he says, "the miracle of the 'atoning sacrifice,' once move in this order of ideas, and what can be more natural and beautiful than to imagine this miracle every day repeated, Christ offered in thousands of places, everywhere the believer enabled to enact the work of redemption and unite himself with the Body whose sacrifice saves him?" "'But it is false!' sternly cries the Evangelical Protestant. O Evangelical Protestant," he adds, "is thine own doctrine, then, so true? As the Romish doctrine of the mass, 'the Real Presence,' is a rude and blind criticism of 'He that eateth me shall live by me,' so the Protestant tenet of justification, 'pleading the blood of the Covenant,' is a rude and blind criticism of 'The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many.' It is a taking of the words of Scripture literally and unintelligently. And our friends the philosophical Liberals are not slow to call this, too, a 'degrading superstition,' just as Protestants call the doctrine of the mass a degrading superstition."[1]

To Arnold neither the doctrine of the mass nor that of justification is a "degrading superstition." Credulity there may be in both, but it is credulity based on a misapprehension in itself intellectual, and to understand

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, chapter ix.

how easily, how inevitably, the misapprehension came about, is to excuse it. Shall these misapprehensions, then, be allowed to continue? Recognising how great an influence for good the extra-belief and anthropomorphism of religious men have exercised upon conduct, which is, after all, the main concern of life, he would answer this question in the affirmative but for one reason. It is that all the doctrines, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, which rest on extra-belief, and cannot be proved, tend more and more to become a stumbling-block to serious men, and that the discredit which falls upon these doctrines becomes a reproach to religion itself.

But the growth of extra-belief, once it set in, could not easily be arrested. The more, after Christ's death, Christianity became diffused, uncontrolled by His personal influence, the more the miraculous and legendary side of the new religion developed and became emphasised, until belief in Christ came to mean far more than the appropriation of His word and spirit; it meant the acceptance of the entire accumulation of supernatural beliefs which had gathered round His person—His preternatural conception and birth, His miracles, His descent into hell, His bodily resurrection, His ascent into heaven, and His future triumphant return to judgment. And belief in these miraculous events, and no longer the simple-hearted following of Christ, soon grew to be the essential thing; and, to bind the believer more fast to credulity, they were

embodied in a set formulary, which at once served as a body of belief and as a test of faith. This was called the Apostles' Creed,—the "popular science of Christianity," Arnold terms it. And popular science it was, without attempt at gloss or metaphysical conception. Nor was it strange that Christian belief should be so crystallised; for "given the alleged charge, 'Go ye and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,' and the candidate for baptism would naturally come to have a profession of faith to make respecting that whereunto he was baptised." [1]

But in time the formulation of dogma fell into the hands of learned men, and a new development was the result. An ancient chronicler, telling of the origin of a long-ruined and long-forgotten abbey of Barnoldswick, in Yorkshire, records how the monks of Furness, desiring to pitch their tent in that region, persuaded the parish priest and his flock to hand over to them not only the existing village church but its revenues, in order that a conventual establishment much more grandiose in character might take its place. What was a lowly rural fane in comparison with an august abbey? Let the simple give place to the more elaborate; religion would gain in authority by the transformation. And the exchange was made. Some such treatment Christian dogma received from the "learned men" of the early Church. The Apostles' Creed was

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, chapter ix.

not, indeed, put away, but there was constructed alongside of it, and overshadowing it, a symbol more erudite, more complex, more imposing, in the Nicene Creed. Arnold calls it the "learned science of Christianity."

Yet even here elaboration did not stop. The metaphysicians did not agree amongst themselves. Philosophy begat more philosophy, "and the doctors who conquered enshrined their victorious form of metaphysics in a creed, the so-called Creed of St. Athanasius, which is learned science like the Nicene Creed, but learned science which has fought and got ruffled by fighting, and is fiercely dictatorial now that it has won;—learned science with a strong dash of violent and vindictive temper."

So it was that history repeated itself. As of old St. Paul complained that to the Jews without miracle Christ was a "stumbling-block," and to the Greeks without philosophy He was "foolishness," so again the "natural truth" of Christ's teaching was discredited in favour of supernatural excrescences, while all the time the doctrine of Christ was "not thaumaturgic and not speculative, but practical and experimental; a doctrine which has no meaning except in positive application to conduct, but in this application is inexhaustible."

What to Arnold's mind makes the dogmas of the Church the more irksome and the more untenable, is the fact that they are the product of ages which lacked the resource and the faculty necessary to a rational

philosophy of religion.[1] "As were the geography, history, physiology, cosmology of the men who developed dogma, so was also their faculty for a scientific Bible criticism, such as dogma pretends to be." His conclusion is, at any rate, wholesale enough:

"The adequate criticism of the Bible is extremely difficult, and slowly does the 'Zeitgeist' unveil it. Meanwhile, of the preternatural and false criticism to which we are accustomed we drop the evidently weak parts first; we retain the rest, to drop it gradually and piece by piece as it loosens and breaks up. But it is all of one order, and in time it will all go. Not the Athanasian Creed's damnatory clauses only, but the whole Creed; not this one Creed only, but the three Creeds—our whole received application of *science*, popu-

[1] "It rarely seems to occur to the early controversialists that there are questions which even the Church cannot solve—problems which not even revelation has brought within the reach of human faculties. That the decisions were right, on the whole—that is, that they always embodied, if they did not always rightly define, the truth—is proved by the permanent vitality of the Church as compared with the various heretical bodies which broke from her. But the fact that so vast a number of the early decisions are practically obsolete, and that even many of the doctrinal statements are plainly unfitted for permanent use, is a proof that the Church was not capable, any more than a man is capable, of extracting, at once, all the truth and wisdom contained in the teaching of the earlier periods. In fact, the Church of the Fathers claimed to do what not even the Apostles had claimed—namely, not only to teach the truth, but to clothe it in logical statement, and that not merely as opposed to then prevailing heresies (which was justifiable) but for all succeeding time."—Dr. Temple in "The Education of the World" (*Essays and Reviews*).

lar or learned, to the Bible. For it was an inadequate and false science, and could not from the nature of the case be otherwise." [1]

And yet those who have most tenaciously clung to ecclesiastical dogma have always been conscious of the simple teaching of Christ. Not only the Fathers of the Church and the theological doctors, but Christian communities of every type and age, have in theory at least professed both the method and secret of Jesus and to some extent have even used them.

"Catholicism laid hold of the *secret* of Jesus, and strenuously, however blindly, employed it; this is the grandeur and glory of Catholicism. In like manner Protestantism laid hold on His *method*, and strenuously, however blindly, employed it; and herein is the greatness of Protestantism. . . . Protestantism laid hold of Jesus Christ's 'method' of inwardness and sincerity, Catholicism laid hold of His 'secret' of self-renouncement. The chief word with Protestantism is the word of the method: *repentance, conversion.* The chief word with Catholicism is the word of the secret: *peace, joy.* And since, though the method and the secret are equally indispensable, the secret may be said to have in it more of practice and conduct, Catholicism may claim perhaps to have more of religion. On the other hand, Protestantism has more light; and, as the method of inwardness and sincerity, once gained, is of general application, and a power for all the purposes of life,

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, chapter ix.

Protestantism, we can see, has been accompanied by most prosperity." [1]

But here comes a contradiction — that while the method and the secret of Christ have, wherever used, borne "their natural fruit of joy and life," this joy and this life have been attributed to the ecclesiastical dogma held along with them, and have been held to sanction and prove it. "And people, eager to praise the bridge which carried them over from death to life, have taken this dogma for the bridge, or part of the bridge, that carried them over, and have eagerly praised it. Thus religion has been made to stand on its apex instead of its base. Righteousness is supported on ecclesiastical dogma, instead of ecclesiastical dogma being supported on righteousness." [2]

II

And now it may properly be asked — What does Arnold leave to Christianity—or, rather, what does his remodelled Christianity (since he insists on retaining the word) leave to Christians? What it leaves to the friend of "natural truth" is obvious—all he wants, since it is his business to reject everything which transcends individual experience, everything which he cannot see with his eyes and touch with his hands. The Christian fares much less fortunately. He, too, is driven back upon reason, and bidden to distrust alike the intuitions of the moral nature, save the one intui-

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, chapter ix. [2] *Ibid.*

tion of righteousness, and the phantasmal suggestions of faith. He is told, indeed, with show of conciliation, that "Whatever Jesus Himself thought sufficient, Christians, too, may bring themselves to accept with good courage as enough for them. What Jesus Himself dismissed as chimerical, Christians, too, may bring themselves to put aside without dismay." But to this it must be answered that what Jesus thought sufficient and dismissed as chimerical is to be decided by Arnold, not by individual Christians for themselves; his consciousness and not theirs is to be the interpreter. And, although Arnold tells us that "Christianity is immortal, it has eternal truth, inexhaustible value, a boundless future," and that "The way, truth, and life have been found in Christianity and will not now be found outside of it," it is necessary to add at once that by Christianity he means something different from the common conception. What he means may best be expressed in the words which occur in his last Preface to *Literature and Dogma*: "The fundamental thing for Christians is not the incarnation but the imitation of Christ."

A brief review of Arnold's attitude towards some of the cardinal articles in the Christian creed will best show where we stand when his rationalist criticism has done its work. First and foremost the idea of God is attenuated to an abstraction: it henceforth connotes neither personality nor consciousness, but simply the "Eternal power, not-ourselves, by which all things

fulfil the law of their being." Nevertheless, he would still encourage prayer, yet prayer as an energy of aspiration towards the "Eternal not-ourselves that makes for righteousness," and of co-operation with it, for than this "nothing can be more efficacious, more right, and more real." The words recall a passage in one of Arnold's earliest letters, written to his mother in 1853: "I have been reading Margaret Fuller" (an American mystic), he writes. "Her address to the poor women in the Penitentiary is really beautiful. 'Cultivate the spirit of prayer. I do not mean agitation and excitement, but a deep desire for truth, purity, and goodness, and you will daily learn how near He is to every one of us.' Nothing can be better than that."

Christ is reduced to a man, neither more nor less, yet supreme and unique in that He represents the purest attainment of humanity; though here a slight concession to orthodoxy is made:

"Jesus Christ is not the Messiah to whom the hope of His nation pointed; and yet Christendom with perfect justice has made Him the Messiah, because He alone took, when His nation was on another and a false track, a way obscurely indicated in the Old Testament and the one only possible and successful way, for the accomplishment of the Messiah's function,—to bring in everlasting righteousness." [1]

Miracle, whether Old Testament or New, the mainstay of popular religion, goes altogether; it is mortally

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, chapter iii.

stricken by Ithuriel's spear — and the *Zeitgeist*. Thus the belief in Christ's physical resurrection is shattered. Obviously it arose in a misunderstanding of His words. "Experience slowly and inevitably reveals that phenomena of this kind do not actually happen. Romulus does not mount into heaven, Epimenides does not awake, Arthur does not return. Their adoring followers think they do, think they have promised it; —but they do not, have not. We have, then, to account for the firm belief of the first Christians in the physical resurrection of Jesus, when this resurrection did not actually happen. We can only account for it from things really said by Jesus which led them to expect it. That Jesus was a fanatic, expecting and foretelling His own physical resurrection—deceived like His followers, but so filling them with His own belief that it prevailed and triumphed with them when He died—is an explanation which the whole account we have of Jesus, read seriously, shows to be idle. His disciples were misled, therefore, by something Jesus did actually say, which had not really the sense that He should physically rise from the dead, but which was capable of lending itself to this sense, and which His disciples misunderstood and imagined to convey it." [1]

[1] *God and the Bible*, chapter vi., 3. I have mentioned elsewhere that when Ferdinand Lassalle, the German social reformer, died in 1864, the popular classes whom he had hypnotised declined for a long time to credit it: "Strange to say, a great number of Lassalle's followers refused to believe that he was

And again: "To the mind of Jesus His own 'resurrection' after a short sojourn in the grave was the victory of His cause after His death and at the price of His death. His disciples materialised His resurrection, and their version of the matter falls day by day to ruin. But no ruin or contradiction befalls the version of Jesus Himself. He *has* risen, His cause has conquered; the course of events continually attests His resurrection and victory." So that in Arnold's sense all great spirits whose influence survives in after ages may be said to have their resurrection.

As with the belief in Christ's resurrection, so with the belief in immortality: it, too, is a matter of extra-belief. Christ's "secret," "He that will save his life shall lose it; he that will lose his life shall save it," is of wider application.

"In our English popular religion the common conception of a future state is just that of the vision of Mirza: 'Persons dressed in glorious habits with garlands on their heads, passing among the trees, lying down by the fountains, or resting on beds of flowers, amid a confused harmony of singing birds, falling waters, human voices, and musical instruments.' Or

dead. Heine had called him 'the Messiah of the nineteenth century,' and many people were convinced then and for years later that he had only disappeared for a time in order one day to return to the scene of his labours and conquests with enhanced glory." (*German Socialism and Ferdinand Lassalle*, p. 182.) What a potentiality of myth and legend this strange act of incredulity would have offered in a remoter and less enlightened age!

even, with many, it is that of a kind of perfected middle-class home, with labour ended, the table spread, goodness all around, the lost ones restored, hymnody incessant. 'Poor fragments all of this low earth!' Keble might well say." [1]

But Christ's promise of life "judges not only the life to which men cling here, but just as much the life we love to promise to ourselves in the New Jerusalem. The immortality propounded by Jesus must be looked for elsewhere than in the materialistic aspirations of our popular religion. *He lived in the eternal order, and the eternal order never dies;*—this, if we may try to formulate in one sentence the result of the sayings of Jesus about life and death, is the sense in which, according to Him, we can rightly conceive of the righteous man as immortal, and aspire to be immortal ourselves." [2]

Here Arnold falls a good way behind even Goethe, whose idea was that those would be immortal who had soul enough to persist.

The doctrine of the Trinity is dismissed as one which Christ can hardly by any possibility have enounced. "It is not in the least like what Jesus was in the habit of saying, and it is just like what would be attributed to Him as baptism and its formula grew in importance." At the same time Arnold tells the Unitarian that he does not make this concession for love of him. "The

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, chapter xii.
[2] *God and the Bible*, Conclusion.

very expression 'the Trinity' jars with the whole idea and character of Bible-religion. But lest the Unitarian should be unduly elated at hearing this, let us hasten to add that so, too, and just as much, does the expression a Great Personal First Cause." [1]

In practice he would allow the Christian Church to follow her work much as before. He even countenanced the evangelisation of non-Christian lands—not excluding lands with ethical religions of their own, like Brahmanism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism — on the old lines for the present, since "the Christianity of our missions, inadequate as may be its criticisms of the Bible, brings what may do them good." He defended the continued observance of the Church festivals, inasmuch as they served to emphasise the spiritual truths associated with them—thus Christmas, through the "miracle of the Incarnation," the beatitude of purity; Easter, the great "secret of Jesus," dying to sin; Lent, with the miracle of the temptation, the idea of self-conquest and self-control; and Whitsuntide, the idea of the spirit and of inspiration. At Trinity Sunday he drew the line, suggesting that "considering the results of their speculation, we ought now rather to keep Trinity Sunday as a day of penitence for the aberrations of theological dogmatists."

But in spite of these negative results there is a positive side to Arnold's criticism. There remains, after all, the Bible teaching of righteousness, and it embodies

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, chapter xi., 3.

eternal truth for humanity. Here religion stands upon the bed-rock of fact, and this foundation defies all criticism and all attack. Nothing could surpass for moral earnestness Arnold's enforcement of conduct as the supreme law of life.

"The whole history of the world to this day is in truth one continual establishing of the Old Testament revelation: 'O ye that love the Eternal, see that ye hate the thing that is evil! To him that ordereth his conversation aright shall be shown the salvation of God.'" "Common prudence can say: Honesty is the best policy; morality can say, To conduct belongs happiness. But Israel and the Bible are filled with religious joy, and rise higher and say, 'Righteousness is salvation!' and this is what is inspiring."

"Nations and men," he writes in the Preface to *God and the Bible*, "whoever is shipwrecked, is shipwrecked on conduct. . . . Whoever leaves it out of his programme, whoever fancies that anything else will do instead, is baffled and confounded by the sure event; experience keeps again and again sending him back to learn better, like a schoolboy with an ill-got lesson." But "As it is true that men are shipwrecked on conduct, so is it true that the Bible is the great means for making men feel this, and for saving them. It makes them feel it by the irresistible power with which Israel, the Seer of the Vision of Peace, testifies it; it saves them by the method and secret of Jesus."

The vivid and eloquent passage in *Literature and*

Dogma, in which he depicts the downfall of ancient kingdoms and nations — Assyria, Babylon, Greece, Rome, Israel itself—for simple lack of moral balance, touches ground upon which all may meet and unite. Seldom did Arnold the moral preacher let himself go as in this passage:

"O long-delaying arm of might, will the Eternal never put thee forth, to smite those sinners who go on as if righteousness mattered nothing? There is no need; they *are* smitten. Down they come, one after another; Assyria falls, Babylon, Rome; they all fall for want of *conduct*, righteousness. 'The heathen make much ado, and the kingdoms are moved; but God hath shewed his voice, and the earth doth melt away.'[1] . . . It is so; since all history is an accumulation of experiences that what men and nations fall by is want of *conduct*. To call it by this plain name is often not amiss, for the thing is never more great than when it is looked at in its simplicity and reality. Yet the true name to touch the soul is the name Israel gave—righteousness."[2]

From this summary of Arnold's principles of biblical interpretation the reader may be inclined to judge that he leaned rather to destructive than constructive criticism. In truth he ended far more negatively than he began. In writing *Literature and Dogma* he disowned, as far as was possible in the nature of his task, merely subversive design, and protested explicitly that his

[1] Psalm xlvi., 6. [2] *Literature and Dogma*, chapter xi.

quarrel was not with popular Christianity as such, but with popular Christianity insofar as it failed to carry the masses with it. But in *God and the Bible*, the sequel of this work, he threw off much of the earlier restraint. The wide attention which his criticism received clearly convinced him that his onslaught upon accepted dogmas had been well timed, and that he would do a still greater service by renewing it. Not only, therefore, was the spirit of his supplementary work more confident, but it was also more aggressive. Two things about the Christian religion must be clear to all persons who have eyes to see, he says in the Preface—"one is that they cannot do without it; the other that they cannot do with it as it is." Less and less became his hesitation in proclaiming the new form which Christianity must take if it was still to retain a vogue, and in the confidence with which he entered upon the task of revision Arnold showed much of the artlessness of those early Christians who were so sure that the new heaven and earth were at hand that they gave away their earthly possessions. Arnold likewise was so confident that the old religion was moribund, that it filled him with wonder to see political Nonconformists agitating for the disestablishment of the Church of England. Why trouble about existing forms of Church government when a new Church is on the way? "The thing is to recast religion," he writes. "If this is done, the new religion will be the national one!" The time had come and the man; all that dissatisfied Christendom

had to do was to accept the message of emancipation. In truth, the ardour with which he for a long time entertained the idea that a new Christianity was near, even at the doors, offers a quite affecting illustration of the indestructible faith in human nature, even at its most sceptical, that miracles *do* happen. Of course disillusionment came in the end, and he was not slow to confess it. His poems, like his letters, bear evidence of a hope deferred. So he writes in the panegyric of Dean Stanley (*Westminster Abbey*, 1881):

> What had our Arthur gain'd, to stop and see,
> After light's term, a term of cecity,
> A Church once large and then grown strait in soul?
> To live and see arise,
> Alternating with wisdom's too short reign,
> Folly revived, refurbish'd sophistries,
> And pullulating rites externe and vain?

And in a letter of August 22, 1879, he speaks in still soberer mood:

"I more and more learn the extreme slowness of things, and that though we are all disposed to think that everything will change in our lifetime it will not. Perhaps we shall end our days in the tail of a return current of popular religion, both ritual and dogmatic. Still, the change, for being slower than we expected, is none the less sure."

Meantime, the perverseness of a generation which was offered the truth and flatly refused to accept it tried his patience sorely. He sees the sceptical folly and stubbornness of Christ's own day enacted over

again. The chief priests and elders of the people and the scribes have their counterpart in the bishops and dogmatists; the Pharisees, with "their genuine concern for religion" yet "total want of perception of what religion really is," are the Protestant Dissenters; the Sadducees are the philosophical Liberals, who "believe neither in angel nor spirit but in Mr. Herbert Spencer," and even the Roman governor is typified by the aristocracy, with its "superficial good sense and good nature, its complete inaptitude for ideas, its profound helplessness in presence of all great spiritual movements."

While, thus, his hope of speedily converting his own countrymen vanished, he built bolder expectations upon the Americans, whose acquaintance he made as a lecturer for the first time in 1883. It was his design to address them upon questions of culture and politics, but the Arnold they knew and welcomed was the Arnold of *Literature and Dogma*. The book had made him both friends and enemies, but the friends were the majority, the enemies were the remnant. "What strikes me in America," he writes home February 7, 1884, "is the number of friends *Literature and Dogma* has made me, amongst ministers of religion especially, and how the effect of the book here is conservative. The force of mere convention is much less strong here than in England. The dread of seeing and saying that what is old has served its time and must be displaced is much less. People here are therefore, in the

more educated classes at least, less prone to conceal from themselves the actual position of things as to popular Protestantism than they are in England, and the alarm at my book, simply as a startling innovation, is not considerable." Probably no incident of his American tour gave him a keener momentary enjoyment than that of which he wrote from Boston (November 29, 1883): "At Newport they showed me the following in a newspaper: 'The Baptist Union recommend all good Christians to give at least two hours to reading their Bible for every hour they give to reading Matthew Arnold.'"

By his free treatment of religious questions generally accepted as finally settled, Arnold created against himself no small prejudice,—prejudice in religious circles as a matter of course, but prejudice also in the circle of his friendships, even within that of domestic relationships, and he has himself attributed the withholding from him of official promotion to prejudice in the headquarters of political patronage.[1] "Noli me tan-

[1] He writes on October 24, 1882: "I announced yesterday at the office my intention of retiring at Easter or Whitsuntide. Gladstone will never promote the author of *Literature and Dogma* if he can help it, and meanwhile my life is drawing to an end, and I have no wish to execute the Dance of Death in an elementary school." The following August Mr. Gladstone offered him ("to my surprise") a pension of £250 "as a public recognition of service to the poetry and literature of England." In a letter written so late as December 5, 1895, Mr. Gladstone says: "It is very difficult to keep one's temper in dealing with M. Arnold when he touches on religious matters. His patronage of a Christianity fashioned by himself is to me more offen-

gere," says Renan, "is the motto of all grand affection; the sense of touch leaves no room for faith." No wonder, then, that the religious public, to which any questioning of dogma is in essence flagitious, turned from the audacious neologist with something of the dread inspired in the Florentines by the poet who had descended into hell. The scruples of these Arnold respected while he profoundly regretted them and held, moreover, that they did him a hard injustice. On the other hand, the professional zealots of orthodoxy fumed and foamed, and answered him in violent invective and arguments according to their capacity. From them he experienced a very practical attestation, which served him long, of that saying of Bishop Wilson—the Virgil who accompanies him in his tour of investigation into the abysmal circles of religious credulity—the Bishop whom he, irreverent critic of all prelates, and especially those of the household of faith, was credited with having created for the manufacture of apt apothegms—"Truth provokes those whom it does not convert." And as they barked so he bit in return. On neither side was the encounter edifying. But there were also many open-minded inquirers, friendly disposed to

sive and trying than rank unbelief." (J. Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, iii., p. 520.) One can imagine Mr. Gladstone's wrath to have been kindled by a passage like the following in *God and the Bible* (chapter i.): "Even of that much decried idea of God as 'the stream of tendency by which all things seek to fulfil the law of their being,' it may be said with confidence that it has in it the elements of a religion new, indeed, but in the highest degree hopeful, solemn, and profound."

reverent examination of the orthodox position, who thought that Arnold was not sufficiently discriminating in his treatment, and apprehended from it ill consequences for popular faith.

And yet, whatever be the total impression made by the reading of Arnold's criticism, one cannot but be struck by the ever-recurring concern which he shows lest he should be dealing hardly with the religion of the masses. While, on the one hand, he is certain of its intrinsic unreasonableness, and certain that it is hastening to decay, he has evidently little heart to impugn its sanction for those to whom it gives satisfaction and a sufficient rule of conduct.

"To popular Christianity from those who can see its errors," he writes in *Literature and Dogma* (chap. xi, ii.), "is due an indulgence inexhaustible, except where limits are required to it for the good of religion itself. Two reasons make this indulgence right. One is that the language of the Bible being—which is the great point a sound criticism establishes against dogmatic theology—*approximate*, not scientific, in all expressions of religious feeling approximate language is lawful, and indeed is all we can attain to. . . . The second is that on both the 'method' and the 'secret' of Jesus popular Christianity in no contemptible measure both can and does lay hold, in spite of its inadequate criticism of the Bible. . . . All this is to be said for popular religion and it all makes in favour of treating popular religion tenderly, of sparing it as much as pos-

sible, of trusting to time and indirect means to transform it, rather than to sudden violent changes."

On the other hand, to the professional theologians he shows no such indulgence, since they have sinned against intellect, against the light; for "learned religion" is "a separable accretion, which never had any business to be attached to Christianity, never did it any good, and now does it great harm, and thickens an hundredfold the religious confusion in which we live. Attempts to adopt it, to put a new sense into it, to make it plausible, are the most misspent labour in the world. . . . . Learned pseudo-science applied to the data of the Bible is best called plainly what it is—utter blunder. . . . To try to tinker such criticism only makes matters worse. The best way is to throw it aside altogether, and forget it as fast as possible."

He admitted, indeed, that while the old beliefs were dissolving, and men were trying to adapt their eyes to a new light, there would be perplexity and stumbling. Probably the party of uncompromising orthodoxy would make desperate efforts to bring about a reaction, and this in turn would lead to a renewal of superstition, the rebellion against credulity being answered by appeal to greater credulity, the rebellion against authority being answered by more authority. And here the Church of Rome would see, and make use of, her chance, as she offered to the timorous believer the consolation of her own certitude, to the restless inquirer, ever learning, yet never able to come to the knowledge of the truth,

the safe and final harbourage of dogmatic infallibility. Others, on the other hand, would discard the Bible and religion altogether, and for their backsliding Arnold had no hesitation in blaming "the religious people themselves, who, from the time of the Apostles downwards, have insisted upon it that religion shall be a thaumaturgy or nothing. For very many, therefore, when it cannot be a thaumaturgy, it will be nothing." And yet these changes all relate to a stage of transition, which would run its course and give place in turn to settlement and fixity. Then would come the work of reconstruction—the true recasting of religion—and Arnold, without binding himself to every detail, was confident that in the new interpretation of the Bible his method would be followed.

Thus he never once doubted, even to the last, that his work was a good one necessary to be done. Writing to his sister October 2, 1874, he says: "It will more and more become evident how entirely religious is the work I have done in *Literature and Dogma*. The enemies of religion see this well enough already." And again in November of the same year:

"For it is my belief, at any rate, that I give something positive which to a great many people may be of the very greatest comfort and service. And this is in part an answer to what you say about treating with lightness what is matter of life and death to so many people. There is a levity which is altogether evil; but to treat miracles and the common anthropomorphic ideas of

God as what one may lose and yet keep one's hope, courage, and joy, as what are not really matters of life and death in the keeping or losing of them,—this is desirable and necessary if one holds, as I do, that the common anthropomorphic ideas of God and the reliance on miracles must and will inevitably pass away. This I say not to pain you, but to make my position plain to you. When I see the conviction of the ablest and most serious men around me that a great change must come, a great plunge must be taken, I think it well, I must say, instead of simply dilating, as both the religious and the anti-religious world are fond of doing, on the plunge's utterness, tremendousness, and awfulness, to show mankind that it need not be in terror and despair, that everything essential to its progress stands firm and unchanged."

Nevertheless, it may be doubted whether the controversies which his religious writings provoked afforded Arnold genuine satisfaction. For they took him away from the domain of pure letters, and embroiled him in a species of polemic which, however great his apparent aptitude for it, was alien to his mission, and he was not sorry when he had said his last word. He published his *Last Essays* on the subject in 1877, heartily glad that they "closed his attempts to deal directly with questions concerning religion and the Church." "Assuredly," he writes, "it was not for my own pleasure that I entered upon them at first, and it is with anything but reluctance that I now part from

them. Neither can I be ignorant what offence my handling of them has given to many whose good will I value, and with what relief they will learn that the handling is now to cease." For theological controversy involved him in controversy politico-theological, and this in turn degenerated into unadulterated politics, until he learned by bitter experience the truth of his own saying: "Politics is a good thing and religion is a good thing, but they make a fractious mixture."

CHAPTER IX

THE ARGUMENT FROM HISTORY

I

ARNOLD'S criticism of the Bible is pre-eminently a criticism, as he would have said, "in the grand style." It is not a question of rectifying petty misconceptions, of reconciling contradictions, of glossing here and amplifying there, of renewing the well-fought contest between inspiration and revelation, nor even, save parenthetically, of determining the validity of miracle, but of revolutionising fundamental conceptions—in his own words, of "recasting religion." And the result—let us confess it—is a picture not merely pathetic but tragic. God is seen, if seen at all, receding into the background of human history. All that mankind seemed to have learned of the meaning of life and destiny, all its sublimest aspirations, its deepest religious experiences, its supposed intuitions of the supernatural, its wistful glimpses into the future,—these are but delusions and phantasmagoria, the stuff of which dreams are made. Man can as yet be sure of nothing, for he knows nothing. He has all his weary work to

go through once more—all the travail, all the tribulation, which seemed to have brought within his reach glowing certitudes of reason, inspiring assurances of faith.

But is the prospect really so gloomy and so depressing? The answer requires some examination of Arnold's main contentions. And here the writer expressly disclaims at the outset all theological purpose and pretension; what he too offers is exclusively a layman's literary criticism.

Happily for the critic of all the foregoing criticism, the scope of his task has been strictly limited for him by Arnold himself. The essential parts of the task are clearly these: to inquire whether Arnold's interpretation of the God-idea as developed amongst the Israelites is really adequate, to inquire whether his own conceptions of religious truth are in reality, as he contends, free from metaphysical elements, and are entirely deducible from experience; and finally to inquire whether his religion of righteousness, from which he would eliminate the supernatural, is a safe substitute for Christianity, having regard to his perpetual injunction that conduct is three-fourths of life. For the practical effects of his speculations cannot be overlooked, and must, indeed, take a leading place in any counter-criticism, since the strongest justification which he advances for this recasting of religion lies in the contention that in the form known to his countrymen, Christianity, its present ground of appeal tends more and more to be weakened and undermined.

The idea of God as righteousness is not, indeed, quite original. It forms the substance of a good deal of German idealistic philosophy; and even the purely contemplative Joubert, whom Arnold so warmly admired, seems to have come near the same conception. Writing to his friend Molé August 10, 1803, Joubert says: "Oui, Dieu sensible à l'âme et devenant pour elle une règle qui la touche et qu'elle ne voit pas, mais à laquelle, autant que peut le supporter sa liberté, elle est forcée de se conformer, parce qu'elle en a de toutes parts le sentiment; Dieu devenant par sa présence perpétuelle, quoique cachée, le principe, la cause constante et l'auteur sentiment du juste et de l'injuste, c'est là une idée qui est fixée en moi, qui vient, qui revient, qui se représente facilement, dans les agitations mêmes de l'existence extérieure, comme une chose vraie, solide et pleine de réalité." [1] It is Arnold's plea, however, that this conception was the Hebrew conception also, which is a very different thing. And the most obvious comment upon the transformation which the religious thought of the Israelites has received at his hands is that his argument here is not merely inconclusive, it is not even persuasive. For proof of his thesis, that in the Hebrew idea of God there is no trace of personality or of metaphysics, he relied upon texts. The natural method of refutation would seem to be to adduce rebutting evidence of the same kind, and certainly if the Bible is to be forced into the witness box—and its

[1] *Correspondance de J. Joubert*, par Raynal.

evidence is clearly necessary to a right understanding of the question—it should be made to furnish a full and unbiased testimony. But Arnold picked and chose his texts at will, so as to suit his own case, in a method which was neither scientific nor judicial nor, let it be added, literary. Some of the illustrations which he adduces in support of his view are strangely unconvincing. "Free as is his use of anthropomorphic language," he writes in one place, "Israel . . . had far too keen a sense of reality not to shrink when he comes anywhere near to the notion of exact speaking about God, from affirmation, from professing to know a whit more than he does know." And in proof of this he quotes from a purely poetical and imaginative book, the poem of Job, the words: "Lo! these are the skirts of his ways, but how little a portion is known of him." And yet, as if anticipating the objection that the sober mind of Israel is more faithfully reflected by prophet and seer than poet, he at once adds the further illustration from the Book of Deuteronomy: "The secret things belong unto the Eternal our God, but the revealed things belong unto us and to our children for ever," etc. Unfortunately for the strength of this illustration another received translation gives to the words a precisely contrary meaning, and one which would not suit Arnold's purpose at all: "The secret of the Lord our God *is revealed to us* and to our children for ever," etc. One might also question, were it very material to the issue, whether Arnold, in his employ-

ment of extracts, has made sufficient allowance for the fact—to recognise which was also a primary duty of literary criticism—that the Old Testament writings, and none so much as those to which he has gone for his evidences, are intensely subjective, the utterances of a people convinced that they were in a special way the objects of Divine favour, and in this relation advancing claims on their own behalf which the rest of mankind become less and less disposed to acknowledge.

But a better answer to his argument is surely to be found when we approach Old Testament religion from that evolutionary standpoint of whose value Arnold was sufficiently sensible in other directions, but which he seems here entirely and strangely to have disregarded—to approach it with the expectation that there will be found from beginning to end a gradual stage-growth, corresponding with the development of civilisation and of the moral consciousness. And our expectation will not be disappointed. What we see at the dawn of Semitic history is a nomadic people whose earliest religious beliefs and moral truths, so far as we know them, are expressed in the primitive way of myth and allegory. Doubtless the quaint story of Eden, in which, as in Persian mythology, the tree of knowledge and the serpent take so prominent a part, goes much farther back than the received chronology. But taking the story as it stands, it clearly attempts, in however fantastic a way, not indeed to explain, but to affirm,

the coming to light of the moral consciousness in the race, and so the knowledge of right and wrong, with the power to make between these "the great choice," as Browning calls it, which for ever and ever constitutes both the drama and the tragedy of life. The deity to which Israel then rendered homage was, as one would expect, little more than a superior man, a deity with human passions, likes, and dislikes, who could even at will take upon himself human form, could walk on the earth and converse with men. It is a primitive stage, but a beginning has been made, and once made, progress henceforward is inevitable. The time then came when "people began to speak of the Lord God"; in other words, the worship of God became a recognised national cultus. Yet the deity of the Israelites continued to be a mere tribal deity, inciting his worshippers to all the blind zeal and jealousy which tribal deities have invariably inspired. For though it was at first sufficient for the Israelites that their god was supreme and unchallenged in their own land, in time their devotion grew fanatical and presumptuous. For a god thus set apart as unique and incomparably superior to his rivals was necessarily conceived as arbitrary and imperious. Moreover, in attributing to their deity absolute power and authority over themselves, the Israelites magnified him, while they also at the same time magnified their own dignity and importance. Hence it came to be regarded as a matter at once of religious and of patriotic duty to wage aggressive war,

in the name of their god, against the nations and national gods beyond their borders. This rivalry was perpetual, though it happened at times that the strange deities enjoyed a fugitive popularity on Israelitish soil, as faithless leaders and reckless kings sought to reconcile their people to a divided allegiance, just as in a later age a Roman emperor could place the statue of a Hebrew prophet in a temple dedicated to Jupiter. These times of backsliding were times of national reverse and misfortune, and Israel, when he returned to his better mind, never neglected to connect the punishment with the offence. Referring to one of these periods of eclipse, there occurs in the Book of Kings (II., xviii., 33–35) a remarkable passage telling how Sennacherib, King of Assyria, sent envoys to King Hezekiah to challenge the god of the Israelites:

"Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the King of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and of Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? Have *they* delivered Samaria out of mine hand? Who are they among all the gods of the countries that have delivered their country out of mine hand that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?"

Only later, when the Israelites had emerged from the stage of untutored violence and military aggrandisement, and had come to apply themselves to the task of developing an orderly and settled political and social life, does the jealousy for their deity take a

milder form. Yet though his supremacy and worship were no longer forced upon unwilling people at the edge of the sword, the aspiration after the world-wide rule of the One God became even more real and more fervent. And meantime deeper religious insight, stronger intuitions of the beyond-man, clearer perceptions of destiny came to the rare minds whose thought was concentrated upon the establishment of Hebrew society upon a theocratic basis. Arnold himself suggests some of the subtle influences which played upon the imagination and heart of this pastoral people in his poem *The Future:*

> What bard,
> At the height of his vision, can deem
> Of God, of the world, of the soul,
> With a plainness as near,
> As flashing as Moses felt
> When he lay in the night by his flock
> On the starlit Arabian waste?
> Can arise and obey
> The beck of the Spirit like him?

And yet it was long before the tutelar deity of the Israelites was revered on the moral side. He is before all things the god of war (in the Song of Moses given in the Book of Exodus (xv., 3) he is called a "man of war"), and even when the attributes of goodness and mercy come to be ascribed to him it is only because he champions the side of his favoured people and gives them the victory over their enemies. It may be admitted that, as Arnold says, in naming his god Israel

"threw out his words at a vast object of consciousness which he could not fully grasp"; but that at this early stage he apprehended this object of consciousness "clearly by one point alone—that it made for the great concern of life, conduct," is a large assumption only to be accepted in the face of overwhelming testimony to the contrary. Right conduct became unquestionably a master-concern of Israel, but first of all in the sense of conciliation, of winning the good-will of a supreme protector, who was benign or malignant according as he was obeyed or disobeyed. If there is any standard fairer than another by which to test the early sanction of conduct in the Hebrew mind it is surely the Decalogue. True, the Decalogue breathes the spirit of righteousness—right conduct—from beginning to end; its social code is, indeed, inadequate and at best enjoins a negative morality; yet right conduct, within set limits, is aimed at. Yet what is the sanction? Certainly not the pursuit of righteousness for the sake of righteousness, of virtue for the sake of virtue; but,—what we should expect in the tentative morality of a primitive age, an age that is feeling its way towards a larger harmony of family and social life,—good conduct commended by hope of reward, bad conduct discouraged by threat of punishment. God, jealous and vindictive, is to be obeyed and revered and conciliated from fear of ill consequences; parental love is to be fostered that Divine blessing may be won; offences against social order are

prohibited on pain of the severest retribution. And, in passing, is it not the strangest forcing of evidence for Arnold to represent the Mosaic marriage law as constituting proof of Israel's special intuition of righteousness, when we consider the low estimate of womanhood which prevailed amongst the Hebrew race?

This well-calculated reciprocity, then, and not any ideal, disinterested conception of righteousness, is surely the mark of early Hebrew religion. True to themselves in everything, but truest in their religious life, the covenants which the Israelites made with their deity were simple acts of barter, setting forth, in the formal and mechanical terms of the market-place, a bargain by which obedience on the one hand was exchanged for blessing on the other.

Here, however, upon so low a plane, their religion could not remain. The faith of the masses always retained more or less of coarser elements, and bore to the last the gross materialistic imprint of a superstitious cultus. Thus even the prophet Amos speaks of star worship as being still prevalent in his time; only six hundred years before Christ Ezekiel relates how the women of Jerusalem were wont to gather at the gates of the Temple once a year to weep for Tammuz, the Syrian Adonis, the beautiful, the beloved of Venus; while, if the testimony of the Books of Maccabees can be trusted, the setting up of groves and altars to strange gods continued amongst the Jews within a century and a half of the Christian era. Nevertheless, the tendency

was throughout more and more to spiritualise religion, and of this tendency the poetry, songs, and supplications of the race afford the most impressive illustration.

There is a true sense in which religion is, as Arnold says, "morality touched by emotion." With the deepening of the moral consciousness this moment of emotion derived growing vigour, and with all sides of his nature set thus in play—intellect, conscience, emotion—the pursuit of conduct became to Israel more and more the pursuit of ideal righteousness. But there the forward movement did not stop. Righteousness is supreme conduct in the relationship of man to man. But the more religion became spiritualised, the less adequate did even righteousness appear to the devout Hebrew mind. Aspiration applied itself to a higher quest, and holiness, which is supreme conduct tested and approved by an absolute standard, conduct viewed in the light of man's relationship to an Object of regard beyond himself, marks the highest level reached by the religious thought of the Old Testament; conduct being now no longer dictated by worldly prudence, by regard for interested ends,—favour for the individual, furtherance for the nation,—but prompted by an inward elevation and aspiration. And yet while thus religion gained continuously in spirituality, the old anthropomorphic conception of God was never discarded, but appears even in the New Testament, where for the first time the attributes of fatherhood are associated with Deity in the form

which mankind has since appropriated with ever deepening attachment. One might, indeed, say that it is the Christian idea of the Fatherhood of God which most strongly riveted anthropomorphism upon popular religion, so that it came to present the strangest mixture of the most engaging spirituality and the most fantastic materialism. Yet spirituality is the essence of modern religion; it is the conquering conception, and shows the lines upon which further advance will be made. A conception of God which ignores the New Testament revelation was bound to be not merely something less but something quite different from that accepted by Christendom, and such "the Power that makes for righteousness" is.

Arnold contends that the Bible should be criticised as every other book is criticised, yet in fact he criticised it as he would have criticised no other historical book. Instead of taking the Old Testament as a unity, and viewing the process of spiritual evolution which it records in its entirety, he abstracted a single idea, and that not the primary idea, and represented this one idea as the kernel of its religious teaching. One may allow, indeed, that it was theoretically competent for Arnold to put forward his conception of God and of religion as one amongst others, to be received or rejected by the verdict of inexorable Time, but to pretend that this conception represents unmistakably the ideal and intent of Israel is to make a claim which no fair weighing of evidence, no impartial reading of history, no true

understanding of the workings of the human mind will support. But even were it, after all, a fact that the God of the Israelites was an abstract "Power making for righteousness," what would be proved? Obviously nothing more than that the religious consciousness of the Israelites had advanced no further at the time when that conception was current. With this, however, Arnold is not satisfied. To that elementary conception —even supposing his argument to be established—he would have mankind conform for all time. That a higher and more spiritual conception has since been evolved is a fact of no consequence. The Israelites thought thus and thus thousands of years ago, and wisdom died with them. The historical method of inquiry claims, on the other hand, that if succeeding ages have given an ever stronger prominence to the spiritual side of religion, holding with growing firmness to the idea of God as Personality, while discarding more and more the grosser aspects of that idea, full weight should be attached to their testimony. Nay, to the later suggestions of the common religious consciousness a special importance should be attributed, unless the process of evolution, recognised as operative in the biological sphere, is to be arbitrarily excluded from the sphere of psychological and psychic experience.

"And this is the good of such an unpretending definition of God as ours—'the Eternal Power not ourselves which makes for righteousness'; it leaves the

infinite to the imagination, and to the gradual efforts of countless ages of men, slowly feeling after more of it and finding it." So writes Arnold. On the contrary, is it not evident that his attempt to bind mankind to a definition of God which, even if it were ever held at all, would carry us back to the twilight of recorded history, involves the negation of all intellectual and spiritual progress? A Semitic race, in a remote age, which cannot ever be dated, arrived at a certain conception of a Power outside itself. Therefore, that conception must be valid ever afterwards. Other races — the Greeks, the Persians, the Hindus — play their part upon the stage of life, and by the long struggle and travail by which all truth is won arrive independently at conceptions of a Supernatural Power which is something more than a principle, even the principle of righteousness, since it recognises conscious Being. Yet they are wrong, and all posterity is wrong, because Israel thought differently. Progress may, indeed, be made henceforth; the coming ages may "slowly feel" after deeper truth: but it must be from the starting-point not of the present, whose wrested trophies of spiritual knowledge are unreal and deceptive, but of a long-vanished, long-forgotten phase of human experience.

But the same disregard of the evolutionary process causes Arnold to ignore the fact that the very idea of righteousness itself was not, as originally conceived, either absolute or elevating. Between the ethical

value of the conception which satisfied the Israelites when to harry and murder their enemies wholesale, for the only reason that they dared to look over the fence that girt round the peculiar people, was the best way of pleasing their god, and that later one which presupposed utter rectitude of conduct, and regarded the most laboured outward acts of propitiation as of no account when compared with purity of life—between these two conceptions of righteousness there lies a whole world of difference, and that difference is only explicable on the theory that a fuller and deeper content was given to the idea of righteousness as the moral consciousness of man developed. Between even the imprecatory Psalms of David (to go no farther back in the process) and the Epistle of St. John lies a moral abyss which Arnold never attempted to bridge; it is questionable whether he ever peered into its depths.

II

We have seen how to Arnold the separation of religion from metaphysics seemed the only thing necessary to make religion a power of vastly increased efficacy. "We see every day," he writes in *Literature and Dogma*, "that the making religion into metaphysics is the weakening of religion." And again: "The metaphysical method lacks power for laying hold on people and compelling them to receive the Bible from it,"—though it has, one must in fairness add, made the world what it is to-day. We must now go further and

ask, Is, then, Arnold's conception of religion itself free from metaphysics? The question goes to the root of his fundamental argument, which is that "There is not a particle of metaphysics in the Hebrew use of the word God." Israel conceived of righteousness only, and this idea of righteousness reached him through the channel of experience. Hence Arnold's purpose is to replace a religion which to the conception of a personal God superadds the categorical enforcement of righteousness, by one from which Deity as personality is eliminated and an abstraction alone remains. What he does, in fact, is to give us a branch instead of the whole tree, the spire instead of the campanile.

Here, however, a very pertinent application of a familiar syllogism suggests itself. If the world rested upon Atlas's shoulders what did Atlas rest upon; and if Atlas were taken away, what would become of the world? In like manner, take away the idea of God, upon which religion now rests, and where goes religion? It is justifiable to ask whether Arnold's definition of God leaves us with religion at all. To Renan, whose judgments upon the problems of religion no less than of life are always too accommodating to inspire confidence, it appeared that "On n'est pas irréligieux pour essayer de séparer la religion du surnaturel"—not irreligious, perhaps, but also, it will seem to many, not specifically religious either. Keeping to the accepted meaning of words, all religion implies the recognition of a Power or Powers beyond man's control. It may

be answered that Arnold's "Eternal not-ourselves" is such a Power, yet there is the vital difference that whereas the scientific definition of religion conceives a Power beyond man's control yet controlling him, Arnold's "not-ourselves" involves no such dependence. Empirical or intuitional ethics would be an exacter term to apply, and by some it has been applied, to the result of this recasting of supernatural religion. It is true that in one place Arnold goes so far as to affirm that from the "Not-ourselves" we derive both "the sense for righteousness" and "the help to do right," but though this view is perfectly consistent with the conception of God as consciousness, he expressly rejects that conception, and behind such rejection we have no right to go. At times he seems to conceive of the Power of righteousness as nothing more than the disposition to value right conduct and to engage in it of which man is sensible, a view which might lead one to identify him with the Positivist position, but more generally he speaks of a "law" to which man conforms by the very necessity of his moral being. This view is constantly affirmed both in *Literature and Dogma* and *God and the Bible.* Thus in the earlier book:

"The idea of God, as it is given us in the Bible, rests, we say, not on a metaphysical conception of the necessity of certain deductions from our ideas of cause, existence, identity, and the like; but on a moral perception of a rule of conduct not of our own making, into which we are born, and which exists whether we

will or no: of awe at its grandeur and necessity, and of gratitude at its beneficence. This is the great original revelation made to Israel, this is his Eternal."

And, again, in the later book:

"This native, continuous, and increasing pressure upon Israel's spirit of the ideas of conduct and of its sanctions we call his intuition of the Eternal that makes for righteousness, the revelation to him of the religion of this Eternal. Really, we do not know how else to account for the evident fact of this pressure, than by supposing that Israel had an intuitive faculty, a natural bent for these ideas; that their truth was borne in upon him, revealed to him." [1]

The word "revelation" was not under the circumstances the best that could have been used here, but it is only fair to accept it subject to Arnold's reservations.[2] Perhaps his characteristic lack of precision when discussing philosophical questions gives us the best clue to Arnold's failure to perceive that in postulating the existence of his Power that makes for righteousness he gives away his whole case against metaphysical religion. That failure proceeds from a simple misunderstanding of the limits of cognition.

[1] *God and the Bible*, chapter ii.

[2] "When the word revelation is employed the distinction between faith and science in their bearing upon religion at once becomes manifest. Science, strictly speaking, cannot admit the conception of revelation at all. It regards that conception as transcendental."—Professor Harnack, in the *Preussische Jahrbücher*, March, 1903.

His conception of God, widely though it differs from the traditional conception of theology, is like it in that it transcends experience. What experience tells us is that certain thoughts and dispositions determine a course of conduct which promotes harmony in individual and social life, and to these thoughts and dispositions and the conduct to which they give rise the terms "right" and "righteous" are applied. But the assumption that behind right conduct there is a Power "making for" it, is as purely metaphysical as the assumption that the universe is governed by "a Personal First Cause, the moral and intelligent Governor of the universe, who thinks and loves." Some Intelligence, however conceived and named, must be at work, even to produce Arnold's scheme of life, since righteousness cannot exist apart from conscious being.

"We do not know whether the Power is a person," says Arnold. Nor is it essential. Perhaps too much labour is expended upon definitions. Arnold himself was needlessly troubled by a desire to define that which he knew to be indefinable. In the second chapter of *God and the Bible* he falls into pages of wearying discussion of the origin of the words expressing the idea of being, the whole of which would have been avoided had he more clearly perceived that mere words and terms are of secondary importance as compared with the meaning which they conveyed to the minds of the users, and which these desired to reproduce. The word "being," he tells us, "gives us one of two things

only—either it gives us breathing and growing, or it gives us effect and operation." But Arnold speaks here of etymology only. What the word in actual use gives depends on what you put into it; not on its origin, but on what it is intended to convey.

"We talk of a being, an *être*," he writes, "and we imagine that the word gives us conscious intelligence, thinking and loving, without bodily organisation; but it does not." But here, again, all depends upon the meaning which is attached to the word; for of itself the word, being but a symbol, can claim none at all. If you do not ascribe to your being conscious intelligence, the capacity to think and love, those attributes will not for you be implied by the word; if you do, they will. The word "Being," as applied to Deity, however, he altogether deprecates; "the word is bad because it has a false aim of conveying some real but abstruse knowledge about God's nature, while it does not, but is merely a figure." To others it will seem that the word "Being" is good simply because it expresses a concrete idea without too definitely insisting upon attributes, its very elasticity and fluidity constituting its merit. "Power," which Arnold prefers, might, indeed, be acceptable were it not that he robs it as to content both of personality and energy, and adopts it for the very reason that it "pretends to assert of God nothing more than effect on us, operation," which is just as much as can be said of the law of gravitation. But, in truth, there is neither

necessity nor wisdom in excessive concern about definitions. Where the most ingenious of definitions can only at best be a guess and an approximation, restraint and reserve are clearly the counsel of prudence, modesty, and reverence. That saying of Joubert, "On connaît Dieu facilement pourvu qu'on ne se contraigne pas à le définir," expresses the mood of an increasing number of thoughtful minds to-day which are as far from rejecting supernaturalism as they are from accepting the crude anthropomorphism of earlier times. The fact which Arnold overlooked is that given as premise even a Power of righteousness, we transgress the limits of empirical knowledge; we assume the supra-sensible, and make religion an object of imagination and faith as well as of reason and experience. An attribute presupposes that to which the attribute can be ascribed; it is impossible to predicate something of nothing. The ideas of extension, form, colour are meaningless unless substance be behind them; without substance they cannot even be conceived. And equally, when we speak of moral attributes, do these presuppose conscious being. Attributes like justice, mercy, wisdom, and Arnold's righteousness are unthinkable apart from personality, and so if without or within man and acting upon him there be a Power that makes for all or any of these, that Power must have consciousness enough to justify us in speaking of personality. But because the conception of this conscious moral Power transcends man's reasonable knowledge, it belongs to the domain of

metaphysics—that domain which it is Arnold's desire to exclude from the purview of religion as irrelevant and superfluous.

And, approaching the question from another side, even to assume with Arnold that a law of righteousness exists in the world, exerting a "native, continuous, and increasing pressure" upon the human spirit—and what an act of faith that very assumption involves!—leaves us still in the centre of our problem. For a law is not a final explanation; a law itself is neither a quality nor a force, but merely the manner in which these operate. Hence the bare supposition of a law of any kind requires us to go still another step back, and to inquire, beside the modes of its expression, the source whence it proceeds. Here, again, we come to the dead wall at which experimental knowledge ends, and beyond which lies as before the *terra invisa* of metaphysics. Moreover, it is contradictory that while Arnold claims to have so very definite an intuition of God as the impalpable thing which he calls righteousness, a notion to which he can only come by the aid of the speculative reason, he refuses to admit that others can by any possibility have an intuition of Him less impersonal.

"So far we know God," he says in one place, "that He is 'the Eternal that loveth righteousness,' and the farther we go in righteousness, the more we shall know Him." Is it only an accident that the holiest men of whom the world has heard—that Apostle whom Arnold

revered beyond all the rest, Thomas à Kempis, St. Augustine—have been the men who built their faith and holiness on the very conception of God which he rejects? Beyond the spiritual elevation of such men mankind will hardly hope to rise.

III

One further question remains to be asked: is Arnold's recasting of Christianity likely to deepen the religious instincts, to renew the faith, of those in whose interest it was specially undertaken? There is no reason to doubt the absolute good faith in which Arnold made the hard case of the masses his own when he wrote: "This is what every one sees to constitute the special moral feature of our time: the masses are losing the Bible and religion." It is, none the less, very doubtful whether his prognosis of the religious signs of the times was an accurate one: and certainly so far as the Bible and religion have suffered in popular attachment, the divorce has been due less to scepticism than to any other cause. The extravagances of the English working man assuredly do not run in the channel of religious speculation. Had Arnold known more about "the masses" whose qualms of conscience touched him to the heart he would never have written: "The cause of it lies in the Bible being made to depend on a story, or set of asserted facts, which it is impossible to verify: and which hard-headed people, therefore, treat as either an imposture or a fairy tale that discredits all

which is found in connexion with it." In a word, the philosophic doubt of the masses was only a pretty fiction, a fiction quite sincerely accepted by Arnold, who never met the masses at close quarters, yet none the less as far removed from the facts of experience as some of the wonder-tales which Ithuriel's spear had pierced.

But if the popular reason had been never so shocked by the dogmatic setting of Christianity, one would still wonder at the confidence with which Arnold placed within reach of those least capable of understanding and using them critical weapons of great destructiveness. When for argumentative purposes it is expedient to have them on his side, the masses, it is true, are to Arnold " hard and downright," men with souls above sham and deception, with eyes turned ever upward to the sun and the stars. If, however, we adopt the measure which he takes of them in his books on culture, instead of the magnified proportions which that measure assumes in his theological discussions, we shall find that his opinion of the masses is a very low one, and that the last thing in the world which he would allow them to do is to think for themselves and to trust their own judgment. Even the excellence of his motives will not convince all people that, in addressing himself so outspokenly to such an audience, Arnold acted prudently. As a rule we are not impressed by the benevolent intentions of the man who, while assuring us that his respect for life and limb is profound, moves about in a crowd with a loaded revolver in his

hand. We ask him to prove his good faith by either leaving his weapon at home or emptying it into the air. Many still believe that Arnold fired his revolver at random, caring far too little whether or not its contents hit marks the shooter never meant. And yet he has himself told us that there exists neither duty nor right to proclaim what one believes to be "the truth on religious matters" under all circumstances.

"Our truth on these matters, and likewise the error of others, is something so relative, that the good or harm likely to be done by speaking ought always to be taken into account. . . . The man who believes that his truth on religious matters is so absolutely the truth, that say it when, and where, and to whom he will, he cannot but do good with it, is in our day almost always a man whose truth is half blunder and wholly useless."

Upon the multitude, then, what must be the effect of reducing the sanctions of religion to the merely ethical force of an appeal to good conduct made in the name of "a Power not-themselves" which, in some way they cannot understand, makes for righteousness? Force such an appeal certainly has, at least for men whose natures are already awakened to the perception of moral truth, but in authority it is fatally lacking. He says truly in *God and the Bible* that "The power of Christianity has been in the immense emotion which it has excited; in its engaging, for the government of man's conduct, the mighty forces of love, reverence,

gratitude, hope, pity, and awe—all that host of allies which Wordsworth includes under the one name of *imagination*, when he says that in the uprooting of old thoughts and old rules we must still always ask:

> "Survives *imagination* to the change
> Superior? Help to virtue does she give?
> If not, O mortals, better cease to live."

But one may fairly ask how many of these allies would remain to man in his contest with the thousand hindrances to right living if religion were whittled down to the abstraction which Arnold would make it. It is difficult to imagine mankind, and least of all the "hard and downright" masses, stimulated thus to the disinterested pursuit of virtue as the highest good, or rendering to the "Power not-themselves that makes for righteousness" either love or hope, either gratitude or awe.

The reader who expects of Arnold perfect consistency here will be surprised to find him at times chiding the more openly aggressive of religious critics as if his method were more virtuous than theirs. The "Liberal philosopher" he is never weary of holding up to scorn, while for the avowed agnostic he has a positive aversion. When one has read Arnold's categorical assertion that the idea of a personal God must go, for there is "not even a low degree of probability for the assertion that God is a person who thinks and loves," it is a shock to come immediately afterwards across such a passage as this:

"After a course of Liberal philosophers proposing to replace the obsolete Bible by the enouncement in modern and congenial language of new doctrines which will satisfy at once our reason and imagination, and after reading these philosophers' grand conclusion that 'there is little indeed in the history and achievements of Christianity in support of the claim made on its behalf to the character of a scheme divinely revealed for the salvation of the human race,'[1] a man may of a truth well say, 'My soul hath dwelt among them that are enemies unto peace!' and may with longing remember Sion."[2] To the ordinary mind, however, there can be little to choose between Arnold and the "Liberal philosophers" whom he arraigns. The latter, too, would admit the paramount obligation of righteousness, and as Arnold attributes to it a purely human sanction, since the existence of the "Not-ourselves" is for him a mere creation of experience without objective existence, such criticism seems very much like the pot calling the kettle black. To Arnold, however, it seemed enough that, though he emptied the God-idea of personality, he still associated it, like the Israelites of old, with righteousness. Hence he can write: "To seek to discard, like some philosophers, the name of God, and to substitute for it such a name as the *Unknowable*, will seem to a plain man, surely, ridiculous. For *Unknowable* is a name merely negative, and no man could ever

[1] Quoted from *Supernatural Religion*, first published in 1874.
[2] *God and the Bible*, chapter ii.

have cared anything about God insofar as he is simply unknowable. 'The *Unknowable* is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble,' is what would occur to no man to think or say." But one may fairly ask whether men would be any more likely, in the searching emergencies which beset all lives more or less, to invoke the "Power not-ourselves which makes for righteousness." One wonders if even Arnold himself meant no more than this when, an alien in a strange land, his heart went out from distant America to the sanctities of his serene home amongst the Surrey hills, and he wrote to his daughter, "God bless you, my own precious Nell!"

But whatever the deity which satisfied Arnold's personal experience may have been, the religion which he gives us in *Literature and Dogma* and *God and the Bible* is neither Deism nor bare Pantheism, but a diluted Positivism. As an ethical system it is in theory admirable, but its positive value is in the highest degree questionable. Pascal's judgment upon the God who emerged from the philosophical investigations of Réné Descartes was that He was a God who was unnecessary. And one may with even greater truth say that the man who is able to receive, and live by, the religion which Arnold offers him is no longer in need of its help and stimulus. To be able to appreciate an ethical idealism a man must himself be already an ethical idealist. Only by a serious intellectual effort can it be apprehended, only by rigorous moral discipline can it be appropri-

ated. It follows, however, that the one who has succeeded in apprehending and appropriating it needs its inspiration no longer; while support and consolation it is impotent to give. The religion that aspires to be universal must meet universal needs: the religion that would be a religion of mankind must be capable of taking man at his lowest and worst and lifting him into the high places of virtue, of moral and spiritual worth. But just because, like all ethical systems, Arnold's religion presupposes a very high degree both of intellectuality and of rectitude, it, with them, is foredoomed to failure as a universal regenerating force. It will fail because it possesses no initial power of edification; it may preserve, but it cannot build up.

And it should fail for the most practical of all reasons. By reducing religion to conduct, and expressly denying to conduct any relation to or meaning for an after-life, he makes religion a matter of policy. It is right and necessary to be good, because man's interest and welfare are so served and only so served. This is strictly true, but if religion carries no further sanction its positive truth obviously becomes a matter quite secondary in importance to its practical influence upon conduct. If this be so, it would appear to be, from Arnold's own standpoint, a fatal and inexcusable error to take from the masses their faith, such as it is, in supernatural religion, which embraces righteousness and much besides, and give to them instead a cold and unemotional ethical code. "For conduct," he tells us,

"is at the very lowest computation three-fourths of human life. The only doubt is whether we ought not to make the range of conduct wider still, and to say it is four-fifths of human life, or five-sixths." [1] Surely, then, it is of immensely greater importance that religion should, to the masses of the people, who do not think, and cannot think, their way through abstruse problems which have baffled the keenest intellects which have ever lived, be given in the form most impressive, most authoritative, most effective for its practical disciplinary purpose of regulating conduct, rather than in one logically more precise and representing a nearer approximation to truth so far as truth can be known. It is this aspect of the question which has allowed all the greatest critics of religion to unite at last on the practical aspect as the one which really matters, and which led acute and relentless minds like Spinoza and Leibnitz to affirm that for the masses of the people, who never emerge from the stage of tutelage, it is a question of insignificance whether the beliefs in which they are brought up, and by which they grope their way through life, will stand the test of reason or not.

Nor is such argument in any way dishonest. Let the difficulties of supernatural religion be as great as they may, the fact remains that, with reservations varying with spiritual insight, culture, temperament, inherited tendencies of thought, it does still claim the

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, chapter i., 1.

attachment of the greater part of Christendom, while behind it is the accumulated testimony of the centuries. "Men . . . are on firm ground of experience when they say that they have practically found Christianity to be something incomparably beneficent. Where they err, is in their way of accounting for this, and of assigning its causes."[1] So writes Arnold, speaking not of the saints and the sages, but of "the plain people," the "hard, downright masses." But why do they err? And why endeavour after a scientific explanation of causes? The thing is that an effect is produced, an influence exerted, conduct controlled and guided to right issues. The man who has found his religion, though it may be altogether irrational and "steeped in prodigy," the best practical help in the practical business of living, does not trouble himself about the metaphysics of belief. He says: "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see!" What needs he to know more? He has learned the secret of conduct, and if a man has learned the meaning of "three-quarters, if not four-fifths or five-sixths of life," he may be forgiven ignorance regarding the remnant.

But why argue the point? Does not Arnold concede it against himself? "Moral rules," he wrote before his hand was turned against theology, "apprehended as ideas first, and then rigorously followed as laws, are, and must be, for the sage only.

[1] *God and the Bible*, Preface.

The mass of mankind have neither force of intellect enough to apprehend them clearly as ideas, nor force of character enough to follow them strictly as laws. The mass of mankind can be carried along a course full of hardship for the natural man, can be borne over the thousand impediments of the narrow way, only by the tide of a joyful and bounding emotion. . . . The paramount virtue of religion is that it has *lighted up* morality; that it has supplied the emotion and inspiration needful for carrying the sage along the narrow way perfectly, for carrying the ordinary man along it at all. Even the religions with most dross in them have had something of this virtue; but the Christian religion manifests it with unexampled splendour." [1]

And this was said of Christianity with all its extra-beliefs, all its stultification of reason, Christianity before its fundamental conception of God as Personality had been challenged in favour of Arnold's "Power not-ourselves that makes for righteousness." For the masses, at least, it has served and may yet serve.

[1] Essay on *Marcus Aurelius*.

CHAPTER X

HIS TREATMENT OF MIRACLE

ARNOLD'S criticism of Christian doctrine bears evidence of conscientious anxiety to penetrate to the very soul of the Founder's teaching, and after all reservations have here been made there remain, by general assent, elements both fruitful and suggestive. Thanks to the ardent sympathy which he brought to this part of his task, he seizes upon salient thoughts with the directness of intuition, and at times he emphasises lines of thought the full significance of which is apt to be overlaid by dogmatical subtleties. Especially felicitous is his treatment of the "method" and the "secret" of Jesus, the method being "inwardness," the "secret" being the renunciation, the death, of the meaner self, followed by the coming to life of the true and higher self. Subjectivity is the master-word in each case, and the emphasis which he attaches to the subjectivity of religion opens up a train of thought which far transcends the immediate purpose of his argument. For in truth the introflective process marks the inevitable climax and culmination of the

ceaseless growth of the human consciousness which it is the business of a philosophy of religion to follow and to interpret. What is the tendency of all this movement but to transfer the sanctions of religion from without to within, religion becoming less objective and more subjective? This tendency has existed more or less in all ages, though it may not have been so clearly recognised as the natural outcome of a long continued psychical process. The spirit which in mediæval times led holy men to cultivate the inner life in the solitude of nature or the calm of the monastic cell is the same spirit which to-day impels reflective men more and more to seek and to find religion within their own breasts; for every soul is its own temple, and as is the temple, so is the deity to whose worship and service it is dedicated. "That seeking for a God *there*, and not *here*, everywhere outwardly in physical nature and not inwardly in our own soul, where alone He is to be found by us, begins to get wearisome," wrote Carlyle long ago in his impatient criticism of the Encyclopædists. Not so much wearisome, perhaps, as futile. "Fool! God is not there but here or nowhere, in that life-breath of thine, in that act and thought of thine." Perhaps Arnold was speculating upon a "Higher Pantheism" of his own when he wrote (*Heine's Grave*):

> What are we but a mood,
> A single mood, of the life
> Of the Spirit in whom we exist,
> Who alone is all things in one?

The chief significance both of "method" and "secret" lies obviously in the stress which they place upon the autonomy of the self, and the power which it possesses over its own destiny. The law of righteousness here takes a higher place than that of the World's Moral Watchman. It is no longer a power "not-ourselves," a force and stimulus acting from without, it is the power of life itself, not merely conditioning but constituting the very essence and content of moral being. Clothed in lonely dignity, the self holds eternal court upon its own actions: against itself it lays complaint, and upon itself it awards either praise or blame with a justice which never falters and never deviates, for in that solemn court, where the self accuses and the self is judge, perjury and sophistry are alike impossible, since everything is known, the deed and the doer, the unseen motive not less than the revealed intent. Such a conception invalidates altogether the artificial theory of rewards and punishments which Christianity took over from ancient Hebraism with other vestiges of a primitive morality[1]—a theory which holds within itself a notion so ignoble that mankind is bound by the very

[1] "Christianity uses language very liable to be misunderstood when it seems to tell men to do good, not, certainly, from the vulgar motives of worldly interest, or vanity, or love of human praise, but 'that their Father which seeth in secret may reward them openly.' The motives of reward and punishment have come, from the misconception of language of this kind, to be strangely overpressed by many Christian moralists, to the deterioration and disfigurement of Christianity."—Arnold in his Essay on *Marcus Aurelius*.

progress of its ethical conceptions to outlive it and lay it aside. Right-doing is its own sanction and its own reward, wrong-doing is its own condemnation and punishment; and while the reward is the elevation of the self, the punishment is its deterioration. The superficial mind, with the theory of social law ever before it, regards the victim of wrong as the sufferer and the pains which retributive justice imposes as blotting out the culprit's guilt. But by the inviolable law of moral compensation the true sufferer is the wrong-doer himself, and he suffers until in the transformation of his own nature there is worked out for him release. It is in this sense that Emerson writes of the law of recompense: "You cannot wrong without suffering wrong. . . . Treat men as pawns and ninepins, and you shall suffer as well as they. If you leave out their heart you shall lose your own. . . . It is as impossible for a man to be cheated by any one but himself as for a thing to be and not to be at the same time." [1] Thus the transference of man from a jurisdiction external and arbitrary to the direct and inviolable jurisdiction of his own conscience gives to the law of recompense a reality and an impressiveness which in the artificial form given to it by conventional theology it can never acquire.

Again, with much of Arnold's criticism of miracle even the most cautious of thoughtful men will in these days agree, and agree just because they are cautious.

[1] Essay on *Compensation*.

These recognise that the less the ultimate sanction of religion is placed upon evidence which rules reason more or less out of court, the stronger will be its appeal to an intellectual age, and that the opposite course holds out the certain prospect of disappointment.

Tertullian's "Credo quia impossibile" and the "Credo quia absurdum" of Sir Thomas Browne, whose only complaint against miracle was that it was not miraculous enough, represent attitudes which are still very common, yet more and more mankind is coming to the view that the evidence of Christianity is intrinsic, is in itself, and that insofar as it is not self-proving, external proof will scarcely convince. Thus when Arnold says, "There is nothing one would more desire for a person or document one greatly values than to make them independent of miracles," and "The substitution of some other proof of Christianity for this accustomed proof is now to be desired most by those who most think Christianity of importance," he passes a criticism which is in the truest sense conservative. And yet here, again, the soberness and restraint of which Arnold says so much that is just and true in his *Speech at Eton* should have served as a breakwater against excessive dogmatism. It may be the fact that "miracles do not happen"; it is certain that Christendom has with general consent believed for nearly two thousand years that the miracle-stories recorded in the New Testament, with the person of Christ as their centre, did happen. Thus the open mind, before

committing itself beyond recall to a wholesale denial of miracle and of its possibility as a *chose jugée*, will never forget to set against a negative argument the counterbalance of this impressive fact. For let the science and criticism of the past be as faulty as they may, the vast consensus of opinion, favourable to the integrity of the Gospel narratives, which has been inherited by our own day cannot be summarily placed on one side as entirely futile and negligible. To many minds, disposed to attribute all justifiable weight to the case against miracle, it would none the less appear that as between a dogmatism which consists in confirming the traditional belief of all past centuries and one which would summarily destroy this belief root and branch and at once anticipate the final issue of thought, the ultimate verdict of mankind, upon one of the most controverted of theological problems, the latter is infinitely the more presumptuous. A cautious judgment would be: "As to theory—Let religion and Christianity, by all means, be commended more and more by their inherent reasonableness and necessity, but even on this question of miracle allow that too sweeping negations are out of place. And as to practice—If faith can do without miracle it is well; if not, a faith that is 'steeped in prodigy' is infinitely better than no faith at all."

. . . . If any there be who fears
That the spark of God in his breast may be quenched in a few short years:

Who feels his faith's fire blaze aloft more clear than it burnt
before
By the thought of the empty tomb and the stone rolled back
from the door—
For him was the miracle done.[1]

And even from the scientific standpoint a policy of reserve may well be regarded as justifiable. As the scientist, in order to obtain a working theory, without which he could not pursue his investigations, often adopts an assumption which he knows, or is ready to believe, to be faulty and inadequate, so in the present stage of our knowledge of biological and psychic laws the traditional view of miracle may at least serve a like useful purpose. The word itself, however, is to science unsatisfactory. The miraculous as commonly defined is that which transcends the known laws of nature. And in olden times, when natural law was still so little understood, occurrences which contradicted observation and experience were properly called "wonders." But more and more, as scientific investigation has penetrated the workings of nature and formulated the underlying laws as they have come to light, the word has become inadequate, until now it merely serves as a convenient makeshift for concealing ignorance or evading difficulty, and with it the scientific mind cannot be content. Even the assumed miraculous must of necessity be subject to causality, and, instead of regarding

[1] *Evensong*, by Lewis Morris. One may recall, too, Arnold's vigorous little poem *Pis-aller*, with its opportunist doctrine, "Believe what best helps."

miracle as involving the wanton violation of natural law, it would be more scientific and more accurate to regard it as a result of the operation of conditions which man has hitherto had no opportunity of observing and attesting. For we do not speak so definitely as of old of "the settled order of nature," and it is even becoming a question where the boundary-line between phenomena and noumena can safely be drawn. When the scientist tells us that the latest discoveries of astronomy support the view that "the supreme end and purpose of this vast universe was the production and development of *the living soul in the perishable body of man*," [1] and when the most careful and conscientious of modern investigators into psychic phenomena affirms that as the result of the new evidence belief in the resurrection of Christ will a century hence have ceased to be an exercise of faith,[2] those restless spirits who imagine that

[1] Dr. A. R. Wallace in the *Fortnightly Review* for March, 1903: "During the last quarter of the past century the rapidly increasing body of facts and observations, leading to a more detailed and accurate knowledge of stars and stellar systems, have thrown a new and somewhat unexpected light on this very interesting problem of our relation to the universe of which we form a part; and although these discoveries have, of course, no bearing upon the special theological dogmas of the Christian or of any other religion, they do tend to show that our position in the material universe is special and probably unique, and that it is such as to lend support to the view, held by many great thinkers and writers of to-day, that the supreme end and purpose of this vast universe was the production and development of the living soul in the perishable body of man."

[2] "In consequence of the new evidence all reasonable men a

science has, upon the question of the supernatural, said her last and irrevocable word may well restrain their impatience. Views like these are surely symptomatic of the present age. Whether the views are right or wrong is not the question; the significant thing is that they are soberly uttered in the name of science. And so long as man can theorise upon the problems which surround him there is hope. The darkness only draws in when mystery not merely confounds and baffles speculation, but eludes it, and man finds himself standing mute and helpless before problems which he cannot even define. Then he recognises with right that his is a condition of profound impuissance.

Arnold is, however, on firmer ground in recognising that it is futile to contend with miracle by the mechanical method of logic. Belief in the miraculous is essentially a matter of individual mental constitution; hence the uselessness of attempting to take by storm the citadel of such a faith. "The nature of the debate as to the miraculous ground in Christianity is such that the conviction of its unsoundness must form itself in a man's own mind, it cannot be forced upon him from without." So he writes in *God and the Bible*, and however his readers may disagree on the first part of this sentence, they will all unite on the second. From

century hence will believe the Resurrection of Christ, whereas in default of the new evidence, no reasonable men a century hence would have believed it."—F. W. H. Myers, in *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, 1902.

his own standpoint he sees that all that can with advantage be done is to state the probabilities of the case, and leave the rest to the dissolving influences of new thought and growing perceptions. One of the best things Arnold ever wrote on the silent action of the mind in assimilating unaccustomed ideas and making them its own without perceptible disturbance of mental habit, or violent wrench of deep-rooted conviction, appears in his treatment of the question of miracle, though its application is universal: "The valuable thing in letters—that is, in the acquainting oneself with the best which has been thought and said in the world—is . . . the judgment which forms itself insensibly in a fair mind along with fresh knowledge. For this judgment comes almost of itself; and what it displaces it displaces easily and naturally, and without any turmoil of controversial reasonings. The thing comes to look differently to us, as we look at it by the light of fresh knowledge. We are not beaten from our old opinion by logic, we are not driven off our ground; our ground itself changes with us."[1] Even so, no duty is more incumbent on the leader of religious thought than that of regard for the dependence of the average mind, and the difficulty with which it adapts itself to novel points of view. The thing is not to plunge unthinking people immediately out of their depth, but to teach them to swim; they will then seek the deeper waters of thought and speculation for

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, Introduction.

themselves, and find therein both safety and invigoration. The vast educational opportunities which here lie open to the modern clergy, but for the most part ignored, will assuredly be recognised and employed in some happier day when the divorce between edification and illumination ceases, and reason is given its proper place in the religious life. But they will have to begin by thinking and speaking up to the intelligence of the educated, and by taking these seriously, remembering those searching words of Benjamin Jowett: "The Christian religion is in a false position when all the tendencies of knowledge are opposed to it. Such a position cannot be long maintained, or can only end in the withdrawal of the educated classes from the influences of religion."

At the same time it is a needless surrender to scepticism to regard the credibility of a supernatural religion as bound up with the credibility of miracle. The two are entirely distinct, and must not be identified. For those who find no difficulty in miracle supernatural religion is, of course, already proved; yet for the less credulous, disbelief in miracle by no means involves disbelief in supernatural religion. Arnold's perverseness on this point is difficult to forgive. Conscious though he was that Christianity and ecclesiastical Christianity are different things, and that, given other conditions of culture and thought, the system of dogma which European theology has built out of the loose material contained in the New Testament might have

taken different forms, he can yet attribute to the one initial supposition of "a Great Personal First Cause, the moral and intelligent Governor of the universe," every single element of supernaturalism in popular Christianity. "And *so*," he says, "arises the account of the God of the Old Testament, and of Christ and of the Holy Ghost, and of the incarnation and atonement, and of the sacraments, and of inspiration, and of the Church, and of eternal punishment and eternal bliss, as theology presents them." It is an assumption entirely gratuitous, yet even here he does not stop. Venerable as is the dogmatic system which the Church has evolved, he contends that it must be either accepted as a whole or rejected as a whole, and that it is "intellectual shallowness" to attempt to distinguish between elements which seem tenable and those which are plainly obsolete. "Granting," he says, "that there are things in a system that are puzzling, yet they belong to a system, and it is childish to pick them out by themselves and reproach them with error when you leave untouched the basis of the system where they occur, and indeed admit it for sound yourself." But Arnold, with his enthusiasm for detecting the inconsequent conclusions of popular Christianity and for divesting "natural religion" of superstitious accretions and incrustations, should surely have been the last man to advance an argument so inconclusive as this. For it goes clean counter to his own method. He himself picked out of the religion of the Israelites

certain, to him sympathetic, elements and called this remnant still Hebraism, out of the religion of Christ certain other elements and called this remnant still Christianity. But the conception of God as creative spirit no more involves the doctrines of original sin and eternal punishment than the conception of a mechanician involves the necessary faultiness of his machines and the conclusion that he will one day choose to end them (according to Calvinism) rather than mend them (according to Universalism).

Yet, on the other hand, it is not a sufficient justification of all the dogmas which to-day hold the field merely to represent them, as Professor Tulloch does, as the results of the honest speculation of holy men, for holy men are like the unholy in sharing the human tendency to err. "In every age," says this writer, "men have thought more or less deeply of religion. From the beginning of the Church the wisest and most humble no less than the most daring and speculative minds have been busy with its great facts and questions. If they lacked, as no doubt they did, the aids of modern criticism, they yet knew profoundly the necessities of our spiritual nature, and the realities of Revelation were living and present to them without the help of this criticism. The Creeds of Christendom have been the fruit of all this study and experience." [1]

But in considering the validity of ecclesiastical dogma the question is not what the necessities of men's

[1] *Modern Theories in Philosophy and Religion*, p. 315.

spiritual nature may seem to require,—and indeed these very necessities, clamorous as they are, are uncertain and subject to every kind of differentiation,—but rather what is permissible from the interpretation of Scripture in the light of the ever-widening moral consciousness of mankind. Most certain it is, as Arnold writes, that "So far as Christian doctrine contains speculative philosophical ideas, never since its origin have the conditions been present for determining these adequately; certainly not in the mediæval Church, which so dauntlessly strove to determine them. And therefore on every Creed and Council is judgment passed in Bishop Butler's sentence: 'The Bible contains many truths as yet undiscovered.'" But the true complement of this just comment is not Arnold's advice to put everything away and begin again with a *tabula rasa*, but is found in the adjustment of the ancient formulæ to improved methods of interpretation, to a larger synthesis of religious facts and experience, and to the later and clearer intuitions of the human conscience. Our watchword, in short, must be, not the Voltairian "Écrasez!" but the Darwinian "Evolution." The attitude here indicated is that so admirably stated in Dr. Temple's essay on *The Education of the World:*

"The Bible . . . is a history; even the doctrinal parts of it are cast in a historical form, and are best studied by considering them as records of the time at which they were written, and as conveying to us the

highest and greatest religious life of that time. Hence we use the Bible — some consciously, some unconsciously—not to overrule but to evoke the voice of conscience. When conscience and the Bible appear to differ, the pious Christian immediately concludes that he has not really understood the Bible. Hence, too, while the interpretation of the Bible varies slightly from age to age, it varies always in one direction. The schoolmen found purgatory in it. Later students found enough to condemn Galileo. Not long ago it would have been held to condemn geology, and there are still many who so interpret it. The current is all in one way—it evidently points to the identification of the Bible with the voice of conscience. The Bible, in fact, is hindered by its form from exercising a despotism over the human spirit; if it could do that, it would become an outer law at once; but its form is so admirably adapted to our need, that it wins from us all the reverence of a supreme authority, and yet imposes on us no yoke of subjection. This it does by virtue of the principle of private judgment, which puts conscience between us and the Bible, making conscience the supreme interpreter, whom it may be a duty to enlighten, but whom it can never be a duty to disobey."

In other words, religious forms change with thought; religion and the religious instinct, which are distinct from all modes of expression, alone persist. For religion is not an idea, but a consciousness, ever revealing itself more clearly and vividly. Moreover, the

process of "world-education" which Dr. Temple formulated has its counterpart in the intellectual development of the single life. As with mankind in general, so with the individual, the ardent faith of youth instinctively inclines to dogmatic statement, and only looks askance at creeds because they seem to contain too little; but age is slower of belief, and when it rejects creeds does so rather because they contain too much. The progress of thought makes inevitably against the inflexibility of symbolism, and one of the surest results of this progress is the change of the spiritual "balance of power," so to speak, from faith to life. The less stress is laid upon mere correctness of thought the more will it be laid upon rectitude of conduct, for the hold which religion by its very genius asserts upon human nature is so imperious that, let the pressure upon conscience fall where it will, of its ultimate influence there will and can be no diminution. "There is indeed in all history," writes an acute thinker, "nothing more tragic than the fact that our heresies have been more speculative than ethical, more concerned with opinion than conduct." [1] But as the latitude of belief broadens, there will be less talk of heresy, and concurrently more regard will be paid to conduct. Toleration rather than dogmatism, however conscientious, is thus the true friend of morality.

In Arnold's opinion: "The great work to be done for the better time which will arrive, and for the time of

[1] A. M. Fairbairn, *The Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, p. 565.

transition which will precede it, is to show that the truth is itself, as it is, incomparably higher, grander, more wide and deep reaching, than the *Aberglaube* and false science which it displaces." But to many it will seem that the really great and necessary work is to reconcile with reason a view of religion which merges Arnold's power making for righteousness in a profounder and more comprehensive synthesis, interpreting the ethical law which mankind implicitly recognises, and more or less successfully obeys, as the expression and the proof of a universal order. To those who thus think, no attestation of the world's moral government can be more impressive than the fact that at a time when hoary civilisations were hastening to destruction, and their ethical systems were decrepit and effete, there appeared a spirit, an influence, a Personality which at once arrested decay, and has ever since served as the inspiration of the moral life of mankind. Men have theorised about that Personality for well-nigh two thousand years, but they have not explained it; they have based upon it all manner of dogmas, accepted in one age and rejected in another; and still the Personality stands sole, unique, and isolated upon the stage of history, like nothing else the world has ever known. That an event of such supreme significance, producing effects so stupendous, should be a mere accident of culture, nay, an unmotived incident of a blind, irrational cosmic process, might indeed seem an assumption so great and daring as to transcend the amplest bounds of human credulity.

CHAPTER XI

THE DOCTRINE OF PURITANISM

INTERPOSING in point of time between the books *Culture and Anarchy* and *Literature and Dogma*, and in some sense epitomising the teaching of both, comes, in the Arnoldian bibliography, a work less celebrated indeed than these, yet marked by solid scholarship and acute reasoning. This is a collection of four essays called, after the first and most important of their number, *St. Paul and Protestantism*. To the theological expert belong the right and the duty of determining the value of this Pauline study as a piece of exegetics, and it is no mean compliment to Arnold the man of letters that the really serious theological criticism herein contained has earned the expert's cordial praise. Even the expert cannot be expected to accept the heterodoxy of the book,—and there is plenty of it, reverently phrased and winningly commended,—yet a judgment like that of Principal Tulloch upon this "singularly lucid and vivid exposition of Pauline thought," Arnold's "best biblical study," is of greater value than more flattering eulogy from critics without special knowledge:

"Nothing can be better than the manner in which he emphasises the moral and practical side of religion which Puritanism sometimes puts out of sight. Nothing can be truer than parts of his analysis of the order of St. Paul's ideas and their ground in the apostolic experience. There are passages here and there so admirably expressed, and even lines of thought so admirably worked out, that we feel ourselves in face of a genuine religious teacher. Failing to do justice to the Puritan theology, or to feel the glowing heart kindled at the Pauline hearth out of which it once sprang, yet—just because he stands so much out of the range of Puritan ideas—he has been able to show how much broader is St. Paul's range of thought than that of Puritanism, and how frequently the latter has emphasised what St. Paul has minimised, and theorised where St. Paul was merely using rhetoric or giving vent to his emotion." [1]

But theological criticism was not in reality Arnold's primary purpose in writing this book. Writing to his friend M. Fontanès, a French pastor, on September 20, 1872, he says: "En parlant de St. Paul je n'ai pas parlé en théologien, mais en homme de lettres mécontent de la très mauvaise critique littéraire qu'on appliquait à un grand esprit; si j'avais parlé en théologien on ne m'eût pas ecouté." His main object was, by setting forth St. Paul's doctrine in a true light, as he himself knew the light, to show that Puritanism rested

[1] *Modern Theories in Philosophy and Religion.*

upon a misconception, or at any rate upon a disproportionate and ill-balanced estimate, of that doctrine. The effort was, in fact, part of an ambitious scheme for the unification of the Churches. As a mere exegetical exercise it may well be doubted whether the task of unravelling Pauline thought would have attracted him. It was one which yielded little romance; there were no prodigies to tilt at, no hoary legends to explode. He was, indeed, conscious that comment upon the apostolic writings took him away from his true *métier*, and before he had emerged from the task it is evident that the spectacle of Matthew Arnold perched in a pulpit, in Geneva gown, preaching to the Nonconformists from their own favourite texts, and proving his own alternative

> . . . doctrine orthodox
> By apostolic blows and knocks,

had become a wonder to himself. One may venture the supposition that it was a sense of acute embarrassment, if not of actual despair, that caused him to stop in the midst of an abstruse disquisition on faith in order to protest: "The object of this treatise is not religious edification, but the true criticism of a great and misunderstood author."

He desired, in fact, that English Puritanism should "return upon its own thoughts and upon the elements of its being," and he was convinced that a disinterested and unprejudiced outsider, such as he regarded himself, was specially qualified to persuade it so to do.

Nonconformity had representatives enough well able to revise its doctrinal basis, but they were unwilling to approach the subject with open mind. Puritanism being from its nature self-centred, it would not look without, and the fact that its existence was staked upon certain traditional conceptions disinclined it to expose these conceptions to the test of a new and objective criticism. Just as *Literature and Dogma* was undertaken as a prolegomenon to a new religion, so here criticism contemplated an ulterior purpose—that of showing the Nonconformists that because they based their Church organisations on an interpretation of scriptural doctrine which was in part erroneous and altogether inadequate, their continued separation was inconsequent and indefensible.

M. Renan had come to the conclusion that the three hundred years' reign which St. Paul had enjoyed, thanks to Protestantism, as the "Christian doctor *par excellence*" was nearing a close. Arnold held precisely the contrary opinion. It was Protestantism which was coming to an end, or at least the Protestantism which had established itself upon a misreading and a misunderstanding of the Apostle's writings. "Its organisations, strong and active as they look, are touched with the finger of death; its fundamental ideas, sounding forth still every week from thousands of pulpits, have in them no significance and no power for the progressive thought of humanity." Here, too, Ithuriel's spear and the *Zeitgeist* had done their work, and done

it with all the wonted efficiency. Arnold held, however, that St. Paul had never had justice done to him, and that both to his reputation and to that of Puritanism itself, were it but conscious of its interests, it could not but be of advantage that the old misconceptions should be removed and the Apostle's teaching be shown in its true light, proportions, and bearings. From this standpoint he claimed that:

"The reign of the real St. Paul is only beginning; his fundamental ideas, disengaged from the elaborate misconceptions with which Protestantism has overlaid them, will have an influence in the future greater than any which they have yet had,—an influence proportioned to their correspondence with a number of the deepest and most permanent facts of human nature itself." [1]

Here Nonconformity was at great disadvantage as compared with the Church of England. Since the Church of England existed before Protestantism, her doctrine contained much more than the specifically Protestant elements. Let everything that Protestantism had derived from the Reformers be taken away, and Arnold believed that all that was most valuable and most serviceable in religion would remain to the Church. It was different with the Puritan denominations, for these had been expressly created as organs for the propagation of Calvinistic and Arminian schemes of dogma.

[1] Essay on *St. Paul and Protestantism.*

"Puritanism exists for the sake of these schemes; its organisations are inventions for enforcing them more purely and thoroughly. Questions of discipline and ceremonies have, originally at least, been always admitted to be in themselves secondary; it is because that conception of the ways of God to man which Puritanism has formed for itself appeared to Puritanism superlatively true and precious, that Independents and Baptists and Methodists in England and Presbyterians in Scotland have been impelled to constitute for inculcating it a Church order where it might be less swamped by the additions and ceremonies of men, might be more simply and effectively enounced, and might stand more absolute and central, than in the Church order of Anglicans or Roman Catholics. Of that conception the cardinal points are fixed by the terms *election* and *justification*. These terms come from the writings of St. Paul and the scheme which Puritanism has constructed with them professes to be St. Paul's scheme."[1]

It is here that Arnold joins issue with Puritanism on religion as in his treatment of its Hebraism he joined issue with it on the question of conduct and culture. In this case as in the other want of proportion and balance, due to defective perception, is Protestantism's besetting fault:

"What in St. Paul is secondary and subordinate Puritanism has made primary and essential; what in St. Paul is figure and belongs to the sphere of feeling,

[1] Essay on *St. Paul and Protestantism*.

Puritanism has transported into the sphere of intellect and made thesis and formula. On the other hand, what is with St. Paul primary Puritanism has treated as subordinate; and what is with him thesis and belonging (so far as anything in religion can properly be said thus to belong) to the sphere of intellect, Puritanism has made image and figure." [1]

It is a subject which becomes more and more one of purely academic and historical interest, yet a proper appreciation of Arnold's criticism requires a brief review of the scheme of human redemption, at once so fantastic and so repellent, which bears the name of Geneva's famous theologian. Calvin's fundamental conception of man is that, though created originally pure and virtuous, the forefather of the race fell from his high estate and by his fall involved all posterity in depravity, and exposed it to Divine wrath, condemnation, and punishment. Even the infant while still unborn shares the common destiny and doom, and that not merely through inheritance of parental guilt, but by virtue of its own innate corruption. Yet mankind is not left wholly to despair. God's Son became incarnate so that He might by His death redeem the lapsed race; union with God through faith in Christ being mediated by the Holy Spirit, man may hope to attain to a new life of righteousness. This redemptive effect of faith is called justification, yet the righteousness which follows is not real but imputed: God accepts

[1] Essay on *St. Paul and Protestantism.*

man as righteous though he is not. Now comes in the specially Calvinistic limitation of God's grace. All men are not saved, even though they may have faith in Christ, for God has from all eternity, by the arbitrary exercise of His indeterminate will, which nothing can influence, predestined a part of the human race to the enjoyment of His favour and of everlasting life and the remainder to His anger and to everlasting death. The essential doctrines of Calvinism, however, are "original sin, free election, effectual calling, justification through imputed righteousness." This Calvinism, says Arnold, is "the positive Protestantism of Puritanism" as distinguished from the "negative Protestantism of the Church of England," and with it are identified, at least theoretically, the Independents and still more the Baptists.[1] The Methodists adopt Calvin's doctrine in humaner form, in the form given to it by the Dutch reformer Arminius, who as a young man had imbibed from his college tutor, John Kolmann, the healthy sentiment that Calvinism "made God both a tyrant and an executioner." The Arminian theology makes man's eternal destiny dependent not on God's arbitrary

[1] The present tense, as it stands in the book, is here used for expository purposes, though in the Preface to the latest edition of *St. Paul and Protestantism* which he prepared for the press Arnold notes the change which had even then come over the Nonconformist mind. "Where is the doctrine of predestination?—Gone!" he writes. Not yet gone, perhaps, but going, let us hope. Truly, as Père Lacordaire says: "Le jour du jugement dernier sera pour bien des raisons un très intéressant et très curieux jour."

will, but on the individual's deliberate choice; if the sinner repents, salvation is unconditionally secured to him. Arminius, too, conceived of man as originally perfect, but though fallen he may by the operation of his free will, aided by the Holy Spirit, be regenerated, and may live henceforth without sin; this is the doctrine of the " perseverance of the saints."

Thus where Calvin lays stress on predestination, Arminius lays stress upon justification by faith: in the one case salvation depends on Divine whim, in the other it depends on human choice. But at the basis of both systems lies the old, persistent anthropomorphism in its crudest form—a God with human attributes, passions, with even less than human virtues, for in making God after his own image man has always adopted a very rudimentary standard of morality.

And yet Calvinist and Arminian are alike in this, that they appeal to St. Paul for the justification of their doctrine, and profess, indeed, each with equal emphasis, that they reproduce the Apostle's essential thought. It is also quite true that all they say is stated, explicitly or implicitly, somewhere or other in St. Paul's writings. Arnold contends, however, that Calvin and Arminius have both failed to detect the Apostle's primary doctrine, and have given a partial and too literal reading to certain passages chosen because they happened to appeal specially to the peculiar bent of their own thought. St. Paul's habit of orientalising, of speaking in the language of figure and hyperbole, has been

disregarded, and so it has happened that prosaic interpreters, lacking a proper appreciation of style and expression, have attributed to the Apostle a scheme of doctrine which at once is his yet is not his:—that is, it may be supported by the mechanical process of text-building, yet it does not represent a correct synthesis of his teaching.[1]

Reduced to a single principle, the Calvinist's incentive for doing good is fear of punishment, that of the Arminian is hope of reward,—neither a very noble or inspiring motive,—and here both fail entirely to enter into St. Paul's spirit.

"What sets the Calvinist in motion seems to be the desire to flee from the wrath to come; and what sets the Methodist in motion the desire for eternal bliss. What is it which sets Paul in motion? It is the impulse which we have elsewhere noted as the master-impulse of Hebraism — *the desire for righteousness*. . . . To the Hebrew this moral order, or righteous-

[1] Jowett had written in *Essays and Reviews* (Essay on "The Interpretation of Scripture"): "The Bible . . . is a book written in the East, which is in some degree liable to be misunderstood because it speaks the language and has the feeling of Eastern lands. Nor can we readily determine in explaining the words of our Lord or of St. Paul how much . . . is to be attributed to Oriental modes of speech. Expressions which would be regarded as rhetorical exaggerations in the Western world are the natural vehicles of thought to Eastern people. How great, then, must be the confusion where an attempt is made to draw out these Oriental modes with the severity of a philosophical or legal argument!"

ness, was pre-eminently the universal order, the law of God; and God, the fountain of all goodness, was pre-eminently to him the giver of the moral law." [1] The law of righteousness governs St. Paul's entire mind and life, and he applies it in every direction. What, indeed, distinguishes his treatment of the eternal theme of his race is his conviction that the commandment to righteousness is "holy and just and good," with the desire to give effect to this commandment. Hence the repeated lists of "moral habits to be pursued or avoided,"—of the virtues which follow from obedience to the law, (the "fruits of the spirit") and of the vices in which disobedience inevitably expresses itself ("the things that are not convenient"). "This man," says Arnold, "whom Calvin and Luther and their followers have shut up into the two scholastic doctrines of election and justification, would have said, could we hear him, just what he said about circumcision and uncircumcision in his own days, 'Election is nothing and justification is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.'"

The Puritan, too, speaks much of righteousness, but his pursuit of it is not disinterested: he loves righteousness, indeed, but not for its own sake. His starting-point is always the desire to obtain heaven or to escape hell. In either case the concern is with "foregone events, the covenant passed, what God has done and does." Man's work, the following of righteousness,

[1] Essay on *St. Paul and Protestantism.*

comes in, indeed, but in a secondary way, in order "to attest and confirm our assurance of what God has done for us." And the reason why Puritanism, with its appeal to hope and fear, plainly admissible elements of human nature though these are, does not satisfy, is that hope and fear are blind instincts, while the love of righteousness appeals both to reason and conscience, both to intuition and experience.

"When Paul starts with affirming the grandeur and necessity of the law of righteousness, science has no difficulty in going along with him. When he fixes as man's right aim 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control,' he appeals for witness to the truth of what he says to an experience too intimate to need illustration or argument."

Yet St. Paul does not minimise the fact of sin, though he treats it differently from the Puritan. "Sin is not a monster to be mused on," says Arnold with characteristic largeness of idea, "but an impotence to be got rid of. All thinking about it, beyond what is indispensable for the firm effort to get rid of it, is waste of energy and waste of time. We then enter that element of morbid and subjective brooding in which so many have perished."[1] It is also a mark of the different position and proportions which sin occupies in Pauline and in scholastic theology that whereas for the

[1] In his Notebook he quotes from Bishop Wilson: "Let us not afflict ourselves with our failings; our perfection consists in opposing them."

latter Christ's divinity establishes His sinlessness, for St. Paul Christ's sinlessness establishes His divinity. Hence St. Paul's key to the mastery over sin is an attachment to Christ which takes the force of actual identification with Him, by the appropriation of His spirit.

"He thus found a point in which the mighty world outside man and the weak world inside him seemed to combine for his salvation. The struggling stream of duty, which had not volume enough to bear him to his goal, was suddenly reinforced by the immense tidal wave of sympathy and emotion. To this new and potent influence Paul gave the name of faith . . . a power, pre-eminently, of holding fast to an unseen power of goodness."[1]

In this word "faith" as used by St. Paul, writes Arnold, "we reach a point round which the ceaseless stream of religious exposition and discussion has for ages circled." Puritanism has talked endlessly of faith, yet it has not always reproduced St. Paul's conception of it. The Puritan idea of faith is an unconditional, unreasoning, emotional trust in Christ; St. Paul's is the entering into the mind and nature of Christ. To Puritanism there is something theurgic, miraculous, in the Christ-relationship; the one matter is what Christ will do with the man who appropriates Him, not what he will do with Christ. Upon faith as the Apostle understood it depends his central doctrine

[1] Essay on *St. Paul and Protestantism.*

—that of the *nekrosis*, the death of the carnal nature, preliminary and conditional to the birth of the spiritual nature.

Fitly might the writer here interpolate for his part: "The object of this treatise is not religious edification, but the exposition of a not wholly understood author." Yet one further quotation must be made from Arnold's unaccustomed religious contemplations as contained in the initial essay in *St. Paul and Protestantism*:

"All impulses of selfishness conflict with Christ's feelings—He showed it by dying to them all; if you are one with Him by faith and sympathy, you can die to them also. Then, secondly, if you thus die with Him, you become transformed by the renewing of your mind, and rise with Him. The law of the spirit of life which is in Christ becomes the law of your life also, and frees you from the law of sin and death. You rise with Him to that harmonious conformity with the real and eternal order, that sense of pleasing God who trieth the hearts, which is life and peace, and which grows more and more till it becomes glory. If you suffer with Him, therefore, you shall also be glorified with Him."[1]

Of St. Paul's conception of faith, again, he says that

[1] It might seem to have escaped Arnold's notice how strongly the passage which he here quotes from St. Paul (Romans viii., 17) bears out his own definition of faith as implying attachment, expressing itself in sympathy and identification. For the Greek word here translated "suffer" means literally to have fellow-feeling, to be like-minded.

it is "at once mystical and rational; and it enlists in its service the best forces of both worlds—the world of reason and morals and the world of sympathy and emotion. The world of reason and duty has an excellent clue to action, but wants motive power; the world of sympathy and influence has an irresistible force of motive power, but wants a clue for directing its exertion. The danger of the one world is weariness in well-doing; the danger of the other is sterile raptures and immoral fanaticism. Paul takes from both worlds what can help him, and leaves what cannot. The elemental power of sympathy and emotion in us, a power which extends beyond the limits of our own will and conscious activity, which we cannot measure and control, and which in each of us differs immensely in force, volume, and mode of manifestation, he calls into full play, and sets it to work with all its strength and in all its variety. But one unalterable object is assigned by him to this power: to die with Christ to the law of the flesh, to live with Christ to the law of the mind. This is the doctrine of the *nekrosis*—Paul's central doctrine and the doctrine which makes his profoundness and originality."

This mystical conception of faith has, however, a more than personal application in St. Paul's mind: it contemplates the individual man's relationship to his fellows as well as to Christ. "The whole race is conceived as one body, having to die and rise with Christ, and forming by the joint action of its regenerate mem-

bers the mystical body of Christ"; hence "whoever identifies himself with Christ identifies himself with Christ's idea of the solidarity of men." "We owe no man anything but to love one another," says Arnold, paraphrasing a well-known scripture, "but he who loves his neighbour fulfils the laws towards him, because he seeks to do him good and forbears to do him harm just as if he was himself."

Hence Arnold comes to the conclusion that the essential terms of Pauline theology are not as Puritanism, following the example of Calvin and Arminius, contends, "calling, justification, sanctification"; but rather "dying with Christ, resurrection from the dead, growing into Christ"—these, however, all in a spiritual sense. Doubtless he accepted the current eschatology of his nation and time,—the second advent, with all the framework of miraculous signs which popular imagination had conjured up,—but he surpassed his contemporaries in that his vital doctrines were independent of all theurgy of the kind, were, indeed, a scientific theology and not a theurgy at all, and herein Arnold pronounces him both original and eternally fruitful and stimulating. "The resurrection Paul was striving after for himself and others was a resurrection *now*, and a resurrection to righteousness." To revert to the well-known Arnoldian categories, righteousness was St. Paul's central idea, his "secret"; the attainment of righteousness by the *nekrosis* was his "method."

"And when, through identifying ourselves with Christ, we reach Christ's righteousness, then eternal life begins for us;—a continual and ascending life, for the eternal order never dies, and the more we transform ourselves into servants of righteousness and organs of the Divine order, the more we are and desire to be this eternal order and nothing else."

The Puritan, too, professes to love righteousness, and love it he no doubt does in his own way, but the righteousness is that of "the earlier Jews of the Old Testament, which consisted mainly in smiting the Lord's enemies and their own under the fifth rib. And we say that the newer and specially Christian sort of righteousness is something different from this; that men like St. Francis of Sales in the Roman Catholic Church and Bishop Wilson in the Church of England show far more of it than any Puritans."

And now, reverting to the doctrine of Puritanism, the divergence of its conceptions from the Pauline line of thought comes more clearly into view. Puritanism goes to Adam for its doctrine of original sin. St. Paul goes to experience, unimpressed by the claims of long descent, impressed overwhelmingly by the palpable proofs around him and in himself, the proofs which consciousness and observation gave every day of his life. "I *see* a law in my members fighting against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity." He did also, it is true, appeal to Adam and the primeval transgression, but only by way of rhetorical flourish; he

employed a popular conception for the better commendation of religious truth to the popular mind. The doctrine of predestination appears likewise to find justification in the Pauline writings, but with St. Paul it was merely secondary. "What with Calvinists is their fundamental idea, the centre of their theology, is for Paul an idea added to his central ideas, and extraneous to them; brought in incidentally and due to the necessities of a bad mode of recommending and enforcing his thesis." And yet if St. Paul can be convicted out of his own uncontroverted letters of seeming to sanction this element of Calvinism, the same writings may be instanced in contradiction of the doctrine. "Anything which might seem dangerous in the grateful sense of a calling, choosing, and leading by eternal goodness—a notion as natural as the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination is monstrous—Paul abundantly corrects in more than one striking passage."

So, too, the Puritan doctrine of "imputed righteousness" through the death of Christ is wrongly made capital in the Pauline theology. "Paul knows nothing of a sacrificial atonement; what Paul knows of is a reconciling sacrifice. The true substitution for Paul is not the substitution of Jesus Christ in man's stead as victim on the Cross to God's offended justice; it is the substitution by which the believer, in his own person, repeats Jesus Christ dying to sin." Arnold grants that the Calvinistic view is strongly supported by the Epistle to the Hebrews, but then that very fact is only

an additional reason for doubting that the Epistle was written by St. Paul. He contends that the conception of Christ's death as a sacrifice to appease an offended God "will never truly speak to the religious sense or bear fruit for true religion," and that it was not St. Paul's conception. "His foremost notion of that sacrifice is that by it Jesus died to the law of selfish impulse, and parted with what to men in general is most precious and near. Paul's second notion is that whereas Jesus suffered in doing this, His suffering was not for His need but ours; not for His good but for ours." For what is the idea of expiation which is involved in St. Paul's doctrine of the Cross? In scriptural language it is "suffering in that wherein we have sinned." This suffering is exemplified in the difficulty of doing right against the pressure of evil impulse, which acts with all the force of past habit and acquired tendencies, entailing an energy of resistance quite out of proportion to the actual emergency. But this burden of expiation falls necessarily upon the just as well as the unjust, though they may have to contend with "no individual habit of wrong, no perverse temper, no enfeebled powers, no resisting past." Simply because of the unrighteousness of others life becomes harder for the righteous, for these, in order to keep pure and unimpaired the standard of goodness, have to struggle and suffer more than would otherwise be necessary. Such, in Arnold's interpretation, was the essence of St. Paul's conception of Jesus Christ's expiation: He

who knew no sin bore the sins of many. Psychologically His death was necessary, even if the legions of angels had been ready to effect His release from His murderers' grasp.[1] The interests of morality required that this supreme event should come to pass, and it is literally true, dogmas apart, that by condemning sin through the sacrifice of Himself Christ has loosened sin's hold and attraction for those who appropriate Him, and so has made it easier for men to understand and follow after goodness—to renounce the imperfect self, and so to die to sin. The "justification" which follows this process is as natural as the Calvinistic idea of "justification" is artificial.

And yet, Arnold complains, Puritanism has set up its mechanical and arbitrary conception as the only true one, has stamped it with St. Paul's name, and has proclaimed it to the world as "the Gospel"! "It thunders against Romanism for not preaching it, it

[1] In his examination of Socrates' defence Grote (*History of Greece*, vol. vii., p. 158) quotes from M. Cousin a striking parallel comment: "On voit qu'il a reconnu la nécessité de sa mort. Il dit expressément qu'il ne servirait à rien de l'absoudre, parce qu'il est décidé à mériter de nouveau l'accusation maintenant portée contre lui; que l'exil même ne peut le sauver, ses principes qu'il n'abandonnera jamais, et sa mission, qu'il poursuivra partout, devant le mettre toujours et partout dans la situation où il est; qu'enfin, il est inutile de reculer devant la nécessité, qu'il faut que sa destinée s'accomplisse, et que sa mort est venue. Socrate avait raison: sa mort était forcée, et le résultat inévitable de la lutte qu'il avait engagée contre le dogmatisme religieux et la fausse sagesse de son temps."

casts off Anglicanism for not setting it forth alone and unreservedly, it founds organisations of its own to give full effect to it; these organisations guide politics, govern statesmen, destroy institutions;—and they are based upon a blunder!"

Carrying the war relentlessly into his antagonists' camp, he asserts:

"It is to Puritanism, and this its Puritan gospel, that the reproaches thrown on St. Paul, for sophisticating religion of the heart into theories of the head about election and justification, rightly attach. St. Paul himself begins with seeking righteousness and ends with finding it; from first to last the practical religious sense never deserts him. If he could have seen and heard our preachers of predestination and justification, they are just the people he would have called 'diseased about questions and word-battlings.' He would have told Puritanism that every Sunday, when in all its countless chapels it reads him and preaches from him, the veil is upon its heart. The moment it reads him aright a veil will be seen to be taken away from its heart; it will feel as though scales had fallen from its eyes."

Perhaps of all Arnold's works this which essayed the restatement of Pauline doctrine has most positively influenced theological thought. *Literature and Dogma* and *God and the Bible* arrested attention by their bold and frank heterodoxy, and the success which they immediately enjoyed was one of esteem where not of

notoriety. *Culture and Anarchy* captivated by the "vigour and rigour" with which it stated truths which everybody believed when confronted by them, yet which, in the heat and rush of life, only the few had beforetimes perceived as vital, salutary, urgent. But *St. Paul and Protestantism* was accepted at once as a serious contribution to dogmatics independently altogether of the writer's immediate purpose. Here there is little of the controversialist; the spirit of battle by apothegm is absent; the voice of levity is restrained. Arnold was fully conscious that his theme required the exercise of a judgment correct as well as calm, and the right spirit and temper are nowhere lacking.

Nevertheless, Arnold was not long sanguine as to the practical effect of his book upon those for whom he professedly wrote, and it has probably not exceeded his expectations. He recognised, in fact, that the acceptance of his views would involve confession of error, and it needs a rare candour and flexibility of mind to admit that you have been cherishing a huge fallacy. "My book and mode of criticism they could not like," he writes of the Nonconformists in a letter of November 15, 1870, "for it is a mode of treatment which inevitably brings to light the unnaturalness and artificiality of the mode they have themselves adopted." Moreover, even granting his theory of the doctrinal basis of Puritanism to be conclusive as to the past, it is hopeless to make it a test for the present. The immediate justification of every existing institution,

whether it be a national church or a Puritan congregation, is that it exists. Its existence does not establish for it a vested interest in immortality, but at least any plea of its superfluity must be founded in practical and not in theoretical considerations. The real question which its critics have to answer is not, why does the institution exist, but why should it not exist? Hence, however strong in the abstract Arnold's argument from doctrine may be, it weighs but little against the practical fact that the separated churches have several centuries of life and work behind them. Hence, too, the fallacy of his contention that because Nonconformity was established upon disputable doctrines, in undermining these he undermined Nonconformity as well. In fact Nonconformity continued, and continues. Arnold is on firmer ground, and presents a case both more convincing and more attractive, when he appeals for unity, not on the archaic and unphilosophical plea that schism is in itself unjustifiable, but on the ground that disunion entails a prodigal waste of energy and is an obstacle to the practical work which religious organisations exist to perform.

CHAPTER XII

THE CRITIC OF NONCONFORMITY

MATTHEW ARNOLD, with all his habitual openness of mind and esteem of moderation, had nevertheless one personal prejudice which he constantly allowed to get out of hand, and its victims were the Nonconformists. One can only surmise how much greater success might have attended even his crusade of culture had his admonitions in this quarter, at any rate, been commended by a more equable temper and a greater indulgence for modes of thought which to him were unsympathetic. There are three kinds of charity—charity of the heart, charity of the intellect, charity of gratified vanity: the first gracious, the second specious, the third nauseous. Charity of the heart insists that every man should be persuaded in his own mind; it recognises that the end of thought is not simply to find and assert your own standpoint, but equally to ascertain how much of right there is in your opponent's case. It is the charity that speaks in those fine words of the large-souled Bishop Chillingworth: "Let them leave infallibility that have no title to it,

and let them that in their own words disclaim it, disclaim it also in their actions." Charity of the intellect tolerates just so far as it can understand another's position, though to this extent it is free from every shade of bigotry; yet withal it sees as in a glass darkly. The specious charity of vanity is the applause with which the shallow mind welcomes the echo of its own ideas. That in this ascending scale of magnanimity Arnold ever passed quite out of the second into the first grade must be doubted. So far as he could enter into other people's thoughts and feelings he was reasonableness itself; but beyond that his patience was easily exhausted. Unquestionably he handled the religious beliefs and convictions of others in a manner too indiscriminate, in a manner which fairly brings down upon him the reproach of that very lack of flexibility which he has so truly affirmed to be the spirit of intellectual Philistinism. Philistinism, however, we may not call it: Samsonism would better describe the "vigour and rigour" of his religious crusade, which left his enemies no place within their own gates, no safety even in the presence of their most treasured deities. Here the Nonconformists specially suffered.

It would be wrong to assume that he took no pains to understand Nonconformity or that he was intentionally unfair in the strictures which he passed upon it. On the contrary, what is particularly striking is the remarkable knowledge of Nonconformist life, thought, and character which goes hand in hand with his ina-

bility to treat either quite fairly. It was a strange freak of fortune which apportioned to him the duty of constantly moving in and out of Nonconformist circles for the greater part of his official life. When he became an Inspector under the Department of Education in 1851 the schools allotted to his charge were almost wholly Wesleyan and British (the latter for the most part connected with the Independents), and in this *entourage* he remained for twenty years, meeting Nonconformity of every mental, religious, and social phase, and forming upon it judgments which gave direction to much of his literary work and bias to some of it. That he succeeded to a wonderful degree in comprehending the people whom thus he had so many opportunities of studying—in gauging their ideals, in sounding their mental depths, and taking measure of their religious outlook—is a singular proof of his keen faculty for character analysis; that he as certainly failed to do them at all times justice is merely a proof of the difficulty of putting oneself in another's place and seeing things from an alien point of view. For widen his judgment and correct his opinions though he did upon many things, here the earliest prepossessions persisted.

That he should have sympathised with Nonconformity was flatly impossible; but his prejudice took the form of positive dislike. The genial insularity which ever clung to him in his wanderings abroad, and which caused him to measure the whole world by an English rod, and it was not a very long one either, had its

counterpart at home in a provinciality—the word is his own and no other describes his attitude — which at times expressed itself in narrowness of view when he happened to judge people, habits, and institutions which were not those of his own intellectual order. The "note of the provincial spirit," he tells us in one of his essays, consists in carrying prejudices and even predilections to extremes, in suffering them to become crotchets. "How prevalent all around us," he adds, "is the want of balance of mind and urbanity of style! How much, doubtless, it is to be found in ourselves,—in each of us! but, as human nature is constituted, every one can see it clearest in his contemporaries." It is all true, all no doubt inevitable, but how unfortunate —for each of us!

It is characteristic of Arnold's frame of mind that his natural classification of English people is into Church and Dissent, a classification the very last which would have occurred to any one of the intelligent foreigners whom he allows to pass verdict upon his country and its institutions. He knew, too, that there existed Protestant and Roman Catholic, Liberal and Conservative, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, Barbarian, Philistine, and Populace; but these were artificial divisions; the true, the vital line of dissection was neither a social, a political, nor a confessional, but an ecclesiastical line,—upon one side of it the historical Establishment, upon the other the crowd of non-conformers. It might seem, indeed, that he became in time half re-

conciled to "the well-known three great denominations," but the thirty others he could never stand. In his letters he continually notes his meeting with "Dissenters," sometimes to praise them, sometimes to blame, but always in a certain spirit of curiosity and wonderment, as though a Dissenter were a social oddity of which he, for his part, did not quite know what to make. One can see that to the end he was conscious as he mingled with them that either he or they were aliens, and judging by the steadiness with which he kept his critical searchlight turned upon them he clearly regarded the exoticism as on their side and not on his. When in 1871 he was given a different class of school his first thought was one of curiosity "to see what will be my experience in dealing with clerical managers; they will certainly be less interesting because so much more what one has been familiar with all one's life." He had then without intermission worked exclusively amongst Nonconformists for twenty years, yet he was conscious that he still saw them from the outside. In short, problems, not persons, blood of his blood and flesh of his flesh—such to Matthew Arnold were the Nonconformists. And you cannot fraternise with a problem.

I make no apology for dwelling at length on a side of Arnold's character upon which limitation is written large. For what is more human than prejudice, and what in Matthew Arnold is so lovable as his humanity? There are admirable critics against whom this

imputation cannot be made, but as a rule the stronger the prejudice the stronger the individuality, and, after all, which of us would not prefer the most partial of writers, let the partiality be but that of originality and genius, to the mental automaton who ponderously grinds out critical justice with the unerring exactitude of a brick press? But however indulgently one may treat the prejudice, there it is, to be explained if possible, and at any rate to be taken account of. I repeat that Arnold's knowledge of Nonconformist thought was unique. In many respects he knew Nonconformity better than it knew, or yet knows, itself. He was conscious of its best points, still more conscious of its failings. And yet with such ample knowledge to guide him, the total impression which his judgments leave is that of inadequacy, incompleteness, inequity. If anywhere, it was here that Arnold failed to do justice to himself and to the ideals for which he ever contended. He, who set such high store by urbanity and sweet reasonableness, whose honest endeavour it was to discover the *vraie vérité* of Christian doctrine, fell short here of the first of all the virtues, that of kindly feeling and kindly dealing (if the *Agape* may be so concretely rendered), and showed instead a want of forbearance which was as little in keeping with the dominant spirit of his own criticism as it was fair to those against whom his censure was directed.

And incompatibility was the explanation of it all. He did not sympathise with the Nonconformists, and

he did not wish to. "Il faut se faire aimer, car les hommes ne sont justes qu'envers ceux qu'ils aiment." The words of Joseph Joubert are more than once approvingly quoted in Arnold's pages. The whole secret lies there.

Nonconformity represented for him a certain number of ideas and characteristics, very specific and very unlovely—on the religious side, narrowness and bigotry; on the political side, envy, malice, and all uncharitableness; on the intellectual, poverty and sterility; on the social, rawness and deficient culture. Whatever broad truth may have underlain the indictment, his habit of generalisation warped his judgment and led him into excess of fault-finding. Thus the picture which he draws of the life of Nonconformity, as simply and solely "a life of jealousy of the Establishment, disputes, tea meetings, openings of chapels, sermons," though a picture no doubt with plenty of truth in it, is yet condemned by its one-sidedness, but the side represented is the one for which Arnold had a special eye, and so he put it forth as a faithful representation of the whole. So it happened likewise that when a Dissenting member of Parliament chanced on one occasion to urge the Government of the day to keep clear of religious controversies or the attitude of his friends must become "a spirit of watchful jealousy," Arnold seized hold of the unamiable words, attributed their sentiment to the entire Nonconformist world, and, with that weakness of his for riding to death a serviceable steed

when once he had bridled it, employed it ever afterwards as a favourite weapon in the controversies which he forced upon his opponents.

Worst of all, he never appropriated his own teaching sufficiently to concede to the Nonconformists the honesty which he claimed for everybody else and for himself above all. So fixed was his conviction that they lived and died to the cause of religious dissension, that the simple and matter-of-fact spectacle of Nonconformist divines attending the Oberammergau Passion Play raises in his mind a suspicion that it is "due to that keen eye for Nonconformist business in which our great bodies of Protestant Dissenters, to do them justice, are never wanting; to a perception that the case against the Church of England may be yet further improved by contrasting her with the genuine article in her own ecclesiastical line, by pointing out that she is neither one thing nor the other to much purpose, by dilating on the magnitude, reach, and impressiveness, on the great place in history, of her rival, as compared with anything she can herself pretend to."[1]

Arnold was never weary of telling the Nonconformists that they asserted their "ordinary selves" far too much. No doubt we all do, but in fairness he should have remembered that it was often the exhibition of the "ordinary self" by others, and sometimes by Arnold himself, which evoked a counter-manifestation—not an admirable or a commendable one, by

[1] *A Persian Passion Play.*

any means, yet so natural and instinctive under the circumstances that blame, if administered at all, should have been fairly distributed.

"Why," he asks, "does not Dissent forbear to assert its ordinary self, and help to win the world to the mildness and sweet reasonableness of Christ, without this vain contest about machinery? 'Why does not the Church?' is the Dissenter's answer. What an answer for a Christian!" But if the Dissenter was aggravated that Arnold directed his preaching exclusively against him, instead of dividing it equally, it is hard to blame him, for he felt that the weaknesses thus detected and rebuked in himself were condoned in his opponents. Moreover, to answer the Dissenter's further question, "Why are we to be more blamed than the Church for the strife arising out of our rival existences?" by saying "Because the Church cannot help existing, and you can!" betrayed an unhistorical judgment and also a lack of that controversial tact upon which Arnold laid so much stress and in general so conspicuously exercised.[1]

But, even granting this limitation of Arnold's large capacity for urbanity and moderation, why thus emphasise it? For a very strong reason. In spite of his antipathy to Nonconformity, no modern writer can tell Nonconformists so much truth which they need to hear and to take to heart, and I conceive that he can best be commended to them, and they can most surely be

[1] Essay on "Modern Dissent" in *St. Paul and Protestantism.*

brought to his books, by beginning with the perfectly frank admission that in judging them he lacked magnanimity and charity, so long as that admission is at once followed by the equally decided, and far more necessary, claim that his intentions were disinterested, his desires benevolent, and that what Nonconformists can learn for their good from no writer of their own, living or dead, can be learned from one whose unhappy reputation it is to be their enemy. Others can and will always be found to praise their virtues, to flatter their independence, and to assure them that their isolation is a source of strength,—to tell them that "Nonconformity represents the best part of English life," and "has made England's history for the last three hundred years," that "every liberty that Englishmen to-day pride themselves on can be traced to the little free churches," that "Mr. Spurgeon was the most intellectually productive man of his time," since "he preached two long sermons each week, edited a magazine, wrote *John Ploughman's Tales*, and produced numerous books," that "the three most widely circulated books in our language are the works of Dissenters—Bunyan, Defoe, and *Watts*"; and much else of the kind, so confusing to historic judgment, so darkening to intellectual counsel.[1] But praise is a stimulative, not a tonic, and what classes no less than individuals mostly need, if they are to advance in the

[1] Chance extracts from the chronicles of the day taken during the preparation of this book.

effort after perfection, is the tonic of a free and frank yet tolerant criticism, a criticism whose purpose it is, not indeed to hold the mirror up to nature, but to hold nature up to the mirror, so that its defects may be observed and remedied. Arnold offered to Nonconformity a criticism free and frank enough if not sufficiently tolerant, and though for the reasons which have been named the gift has not been accepted, it is still to be had for the mere taking.

With all his prejudices, he was able to point with unerring precision to the defects and deficiencies, visible indeed to all who will see them, in the religious life of Nonconformity, and to indicate the lines which must be followed if these are to disappear.

"Sects of men are apt to be shut up in sectarian ideas of their own, and to be less open to new general ideas than the main body of men."

That was the cardinal principle of his criticism. He saw that Nonconformity suffered from its position of isolation. More and more it had chosen to live an independent life, a life self-centred, divorced from the nation's larger interests, and to the extent that it was so divorced concentrating its attention upon the minor things that belonged to its own order and welfare. He recognised, however, that this isolation was an inevitable result of the very genesis of Nonconformity. In its common phrase the clergy who set up separatist congregations rather than subscribe to the Uniformity Act two and a half centuries ago "went out" of the

State Church. Only in later times did it appear how much more than a mere change of Church order and polity the "going out" meant. For in that act of segregation the Nonconformists cut themselves adrift from the main current of the nation's life and culture. The universities and other agencies of enlightenment —these, like the national Church itself, went on as before, but they were henceforth outside. Moreover, the new machinery of education which was in process of time set up in place of that renounced proved necessarily inadequate and inferior, and by reflex action this very lack of proper opportunities for culture had the effect of lessening the esteem in which culture was held.

This is not the place to consider the political aspects of the question, still less to inquire how far right was on one side or the other. It is the plain historical facts which alone concern us here, irrespective of questions of political right and expediency, and whatever be the merits of the ancient feud between the Establishment and Nonconformity, no one can question the incalculable intellectual injury which has resulted to that portion of the nation which has now for over three hundred years lived a separate life and has striven to work out for itself a separate destiny.

But the decay of culture was not the only harm which separation inflicted. By thus detaching itself from the national Church Nonconformity lost touch of the nation's larger life. By shutting itself within the four

walls of a self-contained sectarianism its entire conception of things was dwarfed, its sense of proportion was distorted; its own concerns became for it all-important; the concerns of supreme importance and of absolute validity, which were really the concerns outside its survey, it regarded as secondary and immaterial. Hence proceeded the stunted life, the limited outlook, the partial view of things, which to Arnold as a cultured man of the world, who strove "to see life truly and to see it whole," were so sore an offence, so profound a regret.

"The great thing," we find him writing in one of his domestic letters, "is to drag the Dissenting middle class into the great public arena of life and discussion, and not let it remain in its isolation. All its faults come from that isolation." That no one will doubt who has found his way out of the side shallows of intellectual provincialism back into the full current of national thought. And the proof is that he in the current goes forward, while they in the shallows stand still.[1]

More than that, in leaving the Church Nonconformity left behind half and more than half the power

[1] Writing on February 20, 1869, after the appearance of *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold says: "Dr. William Smith, of the *Quarterly Review*, came up to me a day or two ago with his hand held out, saying he forgave all I had said about him and the *Quarterly*, which, he added, was a great deal, for the sake of the truth and usefulness of what I had said about the Nonconformists. He said he was born a Nonconformist, was brought up with them, and had seen them all his life, so he was a good judge."

of imagination which has played so large a part in moulding and building up every religion which has laid claim in any degree to catholicity. What but lack of imagination lies at the root of most of the deficiencies of Nonconformity—even those deficiencies of which it is itself clearly conscious? Lack of imagination it is which incapacitates men from appreciating the essential spirituality of religion and sends them to-day as of old to "the materialism of the Apocalypse," and nowhere is this materialism so prevalent or so gross as in Nonconformity. It explains the incredible intellectual slavishness which reads the Old Testament in the implicit belief that every statement therein made, whatever the age and circumstances of its origin, stands for universal truth, and which accepts the vague implications of the New on such matters as Church order and discipline in the light of final principles eternally binding which it were rank perfidy to impugn.[1] It is responsible for a style of ecclesiastical architecture without parallel in any other country for dismal ugliness. Because God was no longer to be worshipped

[1] "We . . . busy ourselves in tracing the details of the early Christian life, and we love to find that any practice of ours comes down from apostolic times. This is an exaggeration. It is not really following the Early Church, to be servile copyists of her practices. We are not commanded to have all things in common because the Church of Jerusalem once had; nor are we to make every supper a sacrament because the early Christians did. To copy the Early Church is to do as she did, not what she did."—Dr. Temple's Essay on *The Education of the World.*

alone in the temple at Jerusalem, the early Nonconformists conceived that temples altogether were superfluous, and it is due to the renascence of culture in quite recent times that a wholesome spirit of rebellion against the æsthetic poverty of the traditional house of prayer has broken out amongst their descendants.[1] It is responsible for the Nonconformists' instinctive dread of form, rite, and symbol, regardless of their immense value when rightly employed in the service of religion. A current *Catechism for Protestant Dissenters* gravely warns people against the State Church on the ground (amongst others) of the "unscriptural ceremonies" she imposes, such ceremonies including "bowing at the name of Jesus," "kneeling at the Lord's Supper," "observing certain days as holy," and "the use of sponsors at baptism." "Nonconformists," it says, "should object to kneeling at the Sacrament," because if that were the proper posture the Bible would have enjoined it, and besides, "such kneeling resembles and encourages the popish adoration of the bread and wine as the very body and blood of Christ." Let us be charitable: it is not bigotry, nor even ignor-

[1] Yet with the spirit of reaction ever "watchfully jealous." A reverend speaker, addressing a meeting of the Free Church Councils of England at Brighton in March, 1903, pleaded that "in church architecture the Gothic—spelling thirteenth century sacerdotalism—should be cast aside in favour of something for the twentieth century!" We change fashion in dress every season; why not change fashion in architecture at least every hundred years?

ance alone, which gives rise to "conscientious scruples" of this kind—it is chiefly lack of imagination. Otherwise how explain the fact that the people who practise a very idolatry of Sunday, though an institution of purely social origin and sanction and lacking special Christian significance, devote the most solemn day in the Christian year to work and pleasure? To the same cause must be attributed the strange distortion which the exalted idea of worship has undergone at the hands of the more popular sects, an office which implies adoration of the Deity being degraded to a species of morbid introspection, the worshipper busying himself with the analysis of his own feelings and describing these in the language of rhapsodical and often illiterate hymnology for the common edification.

To understand is often to forgive: such, one may suppose, were Nonconformity and Nonconformist religion as Arnold saw and knew them, and if the perspective of the picture is not altogether exact, if the things which are unattractive and repellent are thrown into relief, and those which are urbane and engaging —and this, above all, the simple striving of the soul after direct communion with the Unseen—lie hidden in the background, there is still so much truth in the presentment as to justify his complaint that "The Puritan type of life exhibits a religion not true, the claims of intellect and knowledge not satisfied, the claim of beauty not satisfied, the claim of manners not satisfied."

But, again, the isolation of Nonconformity from the larger and more generous life of the nation is the fault. "It is hardly to be believed," says Arnold in one of those flashes of truth which suggest rather the critic within than the critic without Nonconformity, "how much larger a space the mere affairs of his denomination fill in the time and thought of a Dissenter than in the time and thought of a Churchman." And he saw that this self-concentration involved loss every way—loss not merely in time, but in breadth of mind, in temper, and in development, since an exclusive regard for one's personal interests entails the perpetual assertion of the ordinary self, and prevents all growth of the better self.

"What is it," he asks, not too suavely, "that the every-day middle-class Philistine—not the rare flower of the Dissenters, but the common staple—finds so attractive in Dissent? Is it not, as to discipline, that his self-importance is fomented by the fuss, bustle, and partisanship of a private sect, instead of being lost in the greatness of a public body? As to worship, is it not that his taste is pleased by usages and words that come down to *him*, instead of drawing him up to *them*; by services which reflect, instead of the culture of great men of religious genius, the crude culture of himself and his fellows? And as to doctrine, is it not that his mind is pleased at hearing no opinion but his own, by having all disputed points taken for granted in its own favour, by being urged to no return upon itself,

no development? And what is all this but the very feeding and stimulating of our ordinary self, instead of the annulling of it?" [1]

A hard saying, but is it untrue? And the chief explanation lies in the dependence of the voluntary system of religion upon its adherents, by whose sole efforts it stands or falls. The Established Church goes on of necessity, for it is part of the machinery of government, like the Crown, Parliament, and the tax-gatherer; the unestablished chapel, on the other hand, exists for its special adherents, yet they no less for it. Hence it is that the individual plays so much larger a part in the religious activities of Nonconformity than he does in those of the Establishment, that amalgam of individualities in which, by a natural process of self-effacement, entirely unconscious yet entirely effectual, the single life and the single energy are merged, and so subordinated to universal ends. Where the Anglican layman says "Better to serve in Rome than rule in a province," the Nonconformist says "Better to rule in a province than serve in Rome." The cynic might say —has said—that for practical purposes both Church and Nonconformity are under pontifical government, with only a difference in the seat of authority, the one placing it in the pulpit and the other in the pew. It is more true, perhaps, that they stand in the relationship of oligarchy to republic. Not only so, but in each case the disadvantages as well as the advantages of the

[1] Essay on "Modern Dissent" in *St. Paul and Protestantism.*

form of government chosen are freely experienced; and, chiefly, that in the Church the subject is not enough a citizen, in Nonconformity the citizen is too much a king.

It was such considerations as these—the retarding influence of isolation, the temptation to which every sect is exposed of magnifying its own doctrine and falling into the spirit of self-satisfaction and even of self-righteousness, and, not least, the special encouragement given by popular systems of Church government to self-assertion — which led Arnold to advance the claim that membership of a national Church is of itself a lesson in religious moderation and for that reason a definite help on the way to culture and harmonious perfection of life. "Instead of battling for his own private forms for expressing the inexpressible and defining the undefinable, a man takes those which have commended themselves most to the religious life of his nation, and while he may be sure that within those forms the religious side of his own nature may find its satisfaction he has leisure and composure to satisfy other sides of his nature as well." Comparing his position with that of the Nonconformist, he sees loss in every direction: "The sectary's 'eigene grosse Erfindungen,' as Goethe calls them—the precious discoveries of himself and his friends for expressing the inexpressible and defining the undefinable in peculiar forms of their own—cannot but, as he has voluntarily chosen them, and is personally responsible for them, fill his

whole mind. He is zealous to do battle for them and affirm them; for in affirming them he affirms himself, and that is what we all like. Other sides of his being are thus neglected, because the religious side, always tending in every serious man to predominance over our other spiritual sides, is in him made quite absorbing and tyrannous by the condition of self-assertion and challenge which he has chosen for himself. And just what is not essential in religion he comes to mistake for essential, and a thousand times the more readily because he has chosen it of himself; and religious activity he fancies to consist in battling for it." [1]

Has the Nonconformist, then, no hope of attaining to a larger life and a more generous conception of things short of forsaking his Nonconformity? Nowhere does Arnold suggest such renouncement as essential. All he claims is that to pursue the old self-centred course is harmful. "It is not fatal to the Nonconformists," he writes, "to remain with their separated churches; but it is fatal to them to be told by their flatterers, and to believe, that theirs is the one true way of worshipping God, that provincialism and loss of totality have not come to them from following it, or that provincialism and loss of totality are not evils." [2]

[1] Preface to *Culture and Anarchy*.
[2] *Ibid.*

CHAPTER XIII

THE STATE AND THE CHURCH

IN spite of his open heterodoxy, Arnold was to the last staunch in his Churchmanship. He has told us how in his Oxford days the Church of England was for him and his friends "the most national and natural institution in the world," and the attachment and the sentiment underlying it never weakened. True, he has strong things to say about Anglicanism at times. Some of his strictures in *A French Eton*, indeed, fall short of justice, and should not be accepted as a final verdict. "It is not easy," he writes there, "for a reflecting man who has studied its origin to feel any vehement enthusiasm for Anglicanism; Henry VIII. and his Parliament have taken care of that. One may esteem it as a beneficial social and civilising agent. One may have an affection for it from life-long associations, and for the sake of much that is venerable and interesting which it has inherited from antiquity. One may cherish gratitude for it . . . for the shelter and basis for culture which this, like other great nationally established forms of religion, affords; those who

are born in them can get forward on their road, instead of always eyeing the ground on which they stand and disputing about it. But actual Anglicanism is certainly not Jerusalem, and I should be sorry to think it the end which Nonconformity and the middle class are to reach."

But in so writing Arnold was concerned to discredit the suspicion that in urging Nonconformity to pay more attention to education he desired to hold up Anglicanism as the goal of his crusade of culture. His truer attitude must be sought in the Sion College address to the London clergy in 1876, in which he goes to great pains to disprove the accusation of hostility to the Church, an accusation "totally erroneous." On the contrary, he claims that he has consistently striven to co-operate with the Church in the carrying out of its special mission, which is simply and solely "the promotion of goodness . . . through the most effective means possible, the only means which are really and truly effectual for the object: through the means of the Christian religion and the Bible."[1] He even goes so far as to confess the relative unimportance of his religious criticisms when compared with the practical work of helping to make crooked natures straight.

[1] Of this address, given on February 22, 1876, and reprinted in *Last Essays*, he wrote two days afterwards: "My address went off very well. . . . It was of no use speaking at Sion College unless I could in some degree carry my audience with me, and I did carry them. . . . The President said that to someone who had expressed his astonishment at my being in-

"If the two are to conflict I had rather that it should be the object and business of those writings which should have to give way. Most certainly the establishment of an improved biblical criticism, or the demolition of the systems of theologians, will never in itself avail to teach men their duty or to assist them in the discharge of it. Perhaps, even, no one can very much give himself to such objects without running some risk of over-valuing their importance and of being diverted by them from practice."

Holding such views, he was not the man to cut himself off from fellowship with others in a matter which touches life so nearly as religion. "Not to break one's connexion with the past in one's religion," he wrote truly both for mankind and for himself, "is one of the strongest instincts in human nature." "But this is inconsistent," it may be said; "Arnold's rebellion against dogma was unreal if he stopped short at its practical consequence." Yet again it should be remembered that his criticism, destructive though it was, was not aimed at ecclesiastical systems—at religion in practice; but at doctrinal systems—at religion in theory; and

vited to speak at Sion College he had answered that it would be found, he was certain, that Mr. Arnold would not speak ten minutes without managing to establish a *rapport* between himself and the clergy, and so it turned out. Altogether I was much pleased, and in my little speech at the end I spoke of my being a clergyman's son, of its being against my nature to be estranged from the clergy, and of the pleasure it gave me to be in sympathy with them."

even had his action in remaining in intimate contact with the Church whose basis he had tried to subvert been hopelessly illogical, it was at any rate more admirable than deserting it after his writings had done their worst. Even the heretic Benedict Spinoza never forsook the Jewish faith; he was driven out against his will. Moreover, Arnold held so firm a conviction of the value of publicly-instituted religion that departure from the Church of his fathers would have been the true inconsequence. Hence it is that while on the one hand he is the uncompromising critic of the Church's doctrine, on the other he is the equally resolute defender of its historical position in the national life.

Advising others, he was still more insistent upon the necessity of no breach with "the church of their country and childhood." He tells them that it is easy for a scrupulous man inclined to adopt his criticism "to exaggerate to himself the barrier between himself and popular religion. The barrier is not so great as he may suppose; and it is expedient for him rather to think it less great than it is, than more great. It will insensibly dwindle the more that he, and other serious men who think as he does, strive so far as they can to act as if it did not exist. It will stand stiff and bristling the more they act as if it were insurmountable." The layman especially need have no difficulty in continuing the old attachment to the Church and in using the recognised formularies subject to his own interpretation of them. He grants that "it is a strong thing to

suppose . . . a man taking orders in the Church of England who accepts, say, the view of Christianity offered in *Literature and Dogma*," and he, at any rate, must consider his position seriously; but the clergyman in office, on the other hand, may hold reservations right and left and still do his work faithfully.

"Religion," he writes, in an outburst of anti-Hebraism, "is a matter where scrupulousness has been far too active, producing most serious mischief; and where it is singularly out of place. I am the very last person to wish to deny it. Those, therefore, who declared their consent to the Articles long ago, and who are usefully engaged in the ministry of the Church, would in my opinion do exceedingly ill to disquiet themselves about having given a consent to the Articles formerly, when things had not moved to the point where they are now, and did not appear to men's minds as they now appear."[1] Looking to the future, however, he anticipates indemnity for the equivocations of layman and cleric alike in the abolition of all religious tests, and he recommends Liberal politicians to give such a measure precedence before legislation which would further disintegrate the Church. Against legislation of this kind Arnold offered uncompromising opposition.

In these days the question of Establishments is regarded more and more as one of political principle.

[1] *Last Essays on Church and Religion*: "A Psychological Parallel."

From that standpoint Arnold did not approach it. Either the public institution of religion is one of the things which, for important considerations of common benefit, are expedient, or it belongs to the things which are indifferent. If the former, considerations of abstract justice cannot be allowed to determine, and a certain overriding of individual wishes and scruples is permissible, because of the object to be served. If the latter, the matter becomes one which may properly be left to the arbitrament of parties, to be settled according to the methods of party life.

Arnold's view is that a Church Establishment is expedient in the national interest, and his whole argument is directed towards its continuance. "Men want religion," he writes, "a rule and sanctions of conduct which enlist their feelings; and the actual forms of Christianity are approximations to this. And men want it public and national, to prevent religion, the proper source of all solidity and union, from being precarious and divided. Hence the national churches." [1] Notoriously, of course, many men do not want religion at all, and far more do not want its public and national institution, yet in this country the body of opinion in favour of an Establishment is probably still so large as to make the question of its abolition one rather academic than practical. But granting this diversity of opinion, how can it best be reconciled? On the one hand there is Nonconformity united in opposition to a

[1] Preface to *Higher Schools and Universities of France.*

species of religious preference which it deems incongruous and indefensible; yet, on the other hand, disestablishment is repugnant to the State Churchman, and if it came about the discontent would only be transferred from one side to the other. There is, however, an alternative, and it is comprehension. Let the Nonconformists abandon their opposition to the national Church and throw in their lot with it, and then their grievance will disappear. To bring them to this large view of the matter was Arnold's purpose.

In support of the reasonableness of Establishments he pleads that they promote the interests at once of true religion and of true culture. The precise form of an Establishment is a matter of secondary importance, and whether it be hierarchical or democratic, whether the rule be that of an Episcopacy or of a Presbytery, will depend upon the character of the people concerned. On the question of principle he is as ready that an Establishment shall exist under Roman Catholic as under Protestant auspices. The very unity which is the underlying idea of Establishment is faithful to the genesis of religion. Theoretically Establishments are not created for the purpose of giving to weak forms or organisations of religion a strength and cohesion which they would not otherwise enjoy, for historically they are descended from times when the State (the community of citizens) and the Church were identical. They are the natural expression of a nation's belief that religious rites are best performed collectively. In

religion there are two elements—the part of thought and speculation and the part of worship and devotion. The one is eminently an individual, the other eminently a collective concern. "It does not help me to think a thing more clearly that thousands of other people are thinking the same; but it does help me to worship with more emotion that thousands of other people are worshipping with me." Again: "Man worships best with the community; he philosophises best alone."[1]

Hence worship, since it is the outcome of a need and an impulse common to human nature, should have in it as little as possible to divide men, so that it may the better become a common and public act; and he adopts the maxim that "The State is of the religion of all its citizens without the fanaticism of any of them."

Though religion became in course of time more and more metaphysical and speculative, this was not the purpose for which the Church was originally formed and was ultimately established. It was rather "a corporation for the purpose of moral growth and practice," and the essence of its teaching was "grace and peace by the annulment of our ordinary self through the mildness and sweet reasonableness of Jesus Christ." Naturally the first Christians drew together, for they felt that by acting in association—an association based on common thoughts and aspirations—their work of evangelisation could best be furthered. It was their

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, chapter vi.

desire to leaven all society with Christ's spirit; hence the first step towards the universality of His kingdom was that they themselves should show to the world visible unity. And just as the individual Christians coalesced into a single congregation, so the isolated congregations merged into communities, for they felt that they could further Christianity better by so doing. As time went on new conditions arose and produced new needs. The primitive organisation of apostolic times became inadequate, and a systematic machinery of government was found desirable. In doctrine, too, the same process of growth and development led to variations, amplifications, extensions in all directions.

"They developed a Church discipline with a hierarchy of bishops and archbishops, which was not that of the first times; they developed Church usages, such as the practice of infant baptism, which were not those of the first times; they developed a Church ritual with ceremonies which were not those of the first times;—they developed all these, just as they developed a Church architecture which was not that of the first times, because they were no longer in the first times, and required for their expanding growth what suited their own times. They coalesced with the State because they grew by so doing. They called the faith they possessed in common the *Catholic*, that is, the general or universal faith. They developed also . . . dogma or a theological philosophy. Both dogma and

discipline became part of the Catholic faith, or profession of the general body of Christians." [1]

The idea of the public institution of religion was thus "an evident natural instinct of mankind, their first plain impulse in the matter"; it was also a just idea and a just impulse, and while religion gained, so did society no less. Arnold quotes with approval Bishop Butler's theory of the public institution of religion as "a standing publication of the Gospel" and "a serious call upon men to attend to it," and of a Church so established as "a city upon a hill,—a standing memorial to the world of the duty which we owe our Maker; to call men continually, both by example and instruction, to attend to it, and by the form of religion ever before their eyes, to remind them of the reality; to be the repository of the oracles of God; to hold up the light of revelation in aid to that of nature, and to propagate it throughout all generations to the end of the world," adding:

"But surely the moment we consider religion and Christianity in a large way as goodness, and a Church as a society for the promotion of goodness, all that is said about having such a society before men's eyes as a city set upon a hill, all that is said about making the Gospel more and more a witness to mankind, applies in favour of the State adopting some form of religion or other—that which seems best suited to the majority—

[1] Essay on "Puritanism and the Church of England," in *St. Paul and Protestantism.*

even though it may not be perfect; and putting that forward as the national form of religion."

This general justification of State Establishments he applies to the Church of England in particular. The instincts and impulses, the needs and aspirations which operated elsewhere operated here likewise. Because religion, construed as the pursuit of goodness, was regarded as a matter of universal concern, the Church was set up to proclaim its sanctions in the sight of the nation. "Nothing interests people, after all, so much as goodness, and it is in human nature that what interests men very much they should not leave to private and chance handling, but should give to it a public institution. There may be important things to which public institution is not given; but it will generally turn out, we shall find, that they are things of which the whole community does not strongly feel the importance."

Arnold's conception of the Church of England is most systematically set forth in the Sion College address already referred to. There he lays it down that the Church is not a private sect, but a national institution, and that no greater injustice could be done to it than to identify it with sectional interests of any kind, whether social, political, or religious. Above all, it is not the Church of the clergy, and to assume that the clergy have a peculiar interest in it, or can claim in any special way to represent and speak for it, is to do the Church a great disservice. It is the Church of the

nation, and only of the clergy as a part of the nation. "There can be no greater mistake than to regard the cause of the Church of England as the cause of the clergy, and the clergy as the parties concerned for the maintenance of the Church of England. The clergy are a very small minority of the nation. As the Church of England will not be abolished to gratify the jealousy of this and that private sect, also a small minority of the nation, so neither will it be maintained to gratify the interest of the clergy." [1]

To those who object that the Church does not know its own mind in matters of doctrine he replies quite frankly that the charge is true, yet this latitudinarianism is one of its chief excellences. Herein the Church shows not only moderation, but the intellectual temper of receptivity, since it aims at reflecting the whole body of current beliefs without giving emphasis to any special phase or element, thus admitting the possibility of indefinite development in a way the separated churches do not. It is his belief that "if the Church of England were disestablished to-day it would be desirable to re-establish her to-morrow, if only because of

[1] "Who are interested in the Church, that is, in the society formed of those concerned about religion?" he asks in the Preface to *Higher Schools and Universities in France*. "The clergy only? No . . . the whole people. And who are really the Church? Evidently the whole religious society, and not its ministers only. The ministers exist for the sake of the community to which they minister; the clergy are for the people, not the people for the clergy."

the immense power for development which a national body possesses." Though when, challenging comparisons, he insists that "In no other great Church is there so little false pretence of assumed knowledge and certainty on points where there can be none," it is hard to resist the suspicion that he is putting in an indirect plea for the acceptance of his own modifications of theological dogma.

It is just the reasonableness of the Church's attitude on questions of doctrine which causes it to minister so effectively to culture, and it was Arnold's conviction that the Church might count on a future of incalculable influence if only it preserved a tolerant temper.

"Its true strength," he says, "is in relying, not on its powers of force, but on its powers of attractiveness. And by opening itself to the glow of the old and true ideal of the Christian Gospel, by fidelity to reason, by placing the stress of its religion on goodness, by cultivating grace and peace, it will inspire attachment, to which the attachment which it inspires now, deep though that is, will be as nothing: it will last, be sure, as long as this nation."

And yet on religious grounds alone he claims that a universal Church is preferable to a multiplicity of rival communities, however active, since a large part of the activity of these must of necessity be occupied in counteracting the evils of divided effort, and he endorses Bishop Wilson's dictum: "It will be found at

last that unity and the peace of the Church will conduce more to the saving of souls than the most specious sects, varnished with the most pious, specious pretences." [1]

That the Church has a social side and a definite social mission is one of those ideas of Arnold's which those who know him only as the impassive apostle of culture and heterodoxy overlook to his disadvantage. He has also a suspicion that the Church has not at all periods of its history, and especially in modern times, been faithful to this part of its obligation. "If there is a stronghold of stolid deference to the illusions of the aristocratic and propertied classes the Church of England, many people will maintain, is that stronghold. It is the most formidable complaint against the Church, the complaint which creates its most serious danger." [2] He points out, however, that if the Church shows special devotion "above all to the landed gentry, but also to the propertied and satisfied classes generally," an attitude which "cannot possibly nowadays attach the working classes, or be viewed with anything

[1] "Does not," he writes in the essay on Joubert (*Essays in Criticism*, 1st Series), "the following maxim exactly fit the Church of England, of which Joubert certainly never thought when he was writing it?—'The austere sects excite the most enthusiasm at first; but the temperate sects have always been the most durable.'"

[2] More explicitly he wrote to a working-man correspondent May 30, 1872: "I entirely agree with you that its squirearchical connexion has been of the greatest disservice to the Church of England."

but disfavour by them," it has not got it from the Bible, nor does this spirit of social preference inhere historically in the Christian religion. "The Bible enjoins endless self-sacrifice all round; and to any one who has grasped this idea the superstitious worship of property, the reverent devotedness to the propertied and satisfied classes, is impossible. And the Christian Church has, I boldly say, been the fruitful parent of men who, having grasped this idea, have been exempt from this superstition." By such men, the men of authoritative utterance, the Church must be judged; and in illustration he quotes rather inaptly a sermon against private property preached by Barrow so long ago as 1671! The curious thing, however, is that Arnold never recognised that the unnatural alliance which he deprecates was one outcome of the Act of Uniformity which established Nonconformity on its modern basis —an Act which, in the words of J. R. Green, marked "the definite expulsion of a great party which from the time of the Reformation had played the most active and popular part in the life of the Church." More convincing certainly than an isolated argument from seventeenth century theology is Arnold's own uncanonical assertion: "A fascinated awe of class privileges, station, and property, a belief in the Divine appointment, perfectness, and perpetuity of existing social arrangements, is not the authentic tradition of the Church of England! It is important to insist upon this, important for the Church to feel and avow it,

because no institution with these prejudices could possibly carry the working classes with it. And it is necessary for the Church, if it is to live, that it should carry the working classes with it."

CHAPTER XIV

HIS PLEA FOR COMPREHENSION

SO far the historical justification of Establishments in general and the doctrinal basis of the Church of England in particular. Arnold is less convincing when he attempts to lay down the ethic of ecclesiastical dissent. Separation, he affirms, may in principle be defensible, but it must not arise on matters either of doctrine, discipline, or polity. Separation is only reasonable and right on "plain points of morals. For these involve the very essence of the Christian Gospel and the very ground on which the Christian Church is built." Hence—"The sale of indulgences, if deliberately instituted and persisted in by the main body of the Church, afforded a valid reason for breaking unity; the doctrine of purgatory, or of the real presence, did not." And again: "The moral corruptions of Rome . . . were a real ground for separation. On their account, and solely on their account, if they could not be got rid of, was separation not only lawful but necessary." For this same reason, however, the secession of the Nonconformists was neither necessary nor lawful.

Yet the distinction is not a satisfactory one: it is artificial; it either goes too far or it does not go far enough. For if an abuse like the sale of indulgences justified rupture with the Church of Rome, it is difficult to see how, by parity of reasoning, the abuses of simony and pluralities should not have justified schism in the Church of England, for neither is a matter of doctrine or of polity, but essentially one of Christian morality. Moreover, if "moral corruptions" make schism laudable, the lax morality of which many representatives of the Reformed Church were accused in the seventeenth century might be pleaded in justification of the separation which then took place independently of doctrinal scruples.[1]

In passing it is noticeable that Arnold renounces the claim, more commonly advanced in these days than when he wrote, that in spite of the break with Rome the Church of England might still claim to be the "old, historic, Catholic Church of England." The "historic Church of England" she unquestionably re-

[1] "From thence he passes to inquire," rejoins Milton to Bishop Hall in his *Apology for Smectymnuus* (1642), "wherefore I should blame the vices of the prelates only, seeing the inferior clergy is known to be as faulty. To which let him hear in brief: that those priests whose vices have been notorious are all prelatical, which argues both the impiety of that opinion and the wicked remissness of that government. We hear not of any which are called nonconformists that have been accused of scandalous living; but are known to be pious or at least sober men; which is a great good argument that they are in the truth and prelates in the error."

mains, but "unless one chooses to fight about words, and fancifully to put into the word Catholic some occult quality, one must allow that the changes made in the Church of England at the Reformation impaired its catholicity." He agrees that there was loss to her in foregoing the old common profession and worship, "but the loss was, as Protestants maintain, incurred for the sake of something yet more precious still,—the purity of that moral practice which was the very cause for which the common profession and worship existed. Now it seems captious to incur voluntarily a loss for a great and worthy object, and at the same time, by a conjuring with words, to try and make it appear that we have not suffered the loss at all. So on the word Catholic we will not insist too jealously; but this much, at any rate, must be allowed to the Church of England —that she kept enough of the past to preserve, as far as this nation was concerned, her continuity, to be still the historic Church of England." [1]

With the form of religion which the Church of England commends to the nation—a form which represents approximately a crystallisation of long centuries of progressive religious thought—Arnold compares Puritanism as it arose in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and has been handed down with but little modification to the present day. That the comparison is made with absolute fairness cannot be said. Upon questions

[1] Essay on "Puritanism and the Church of England" in *St. Paul and Protestantism.*

which involved the manifold interests of culture Arnold felt too strongly to be able to observe nicety of proportion in judgment, but his indictment of Puritanism, if relentlessly severe, contains at least some elements of wholesome truth. He has two principal complaints to lay to its charge—its assumption of religious superiority and its indifference to culture. By giving its *imprimatur* to a select set of doctrines, and affirming these to be the whole truth of the Gospel, Puritanism set itself apart as a sort of self-contained religious commonwealth. Moreover, by accepting a certain theological system as final and sacrosanct, it ceased to contribute to the common growth, since it killed the power of growth in itself. For the Puritans to turn their "Scriptural Protestantism" into a fetish was the first wrong step, but the next and equally wrong step was the logical outcome of it—this fetish they used as a mechanical test of all other forms of religion; and according as these conformed to it or not they were arbitrarily declared to be partially true or wholly false. The flexibility and openness of mind which characterise the Church of England the Puritans have never shared.

"And how should they have shared it? They were founded on the negation of that idea of development which plays so important a part in the life of the Church; on the assumption that there is a divinely appointed Church order fixed once for all in the Bible, and that they have adopted it; that there is a doctrinal scheme of faith, justification, and imputed righteous-

ness, which is the test of a standing or falling Church and the essence of the Gospel, and that they have extracted it. These are assumptions which, as they make union impossible, so also make growth impossible."

There were, of course, Puritans who recognised the inadequacy of the doctrinal argument for separation, and these professed to find their justification by objecting to a State Church. Arnold holds, however, that this was an afterthought, for in the seventeenth century both Puritan and Anglican alike advocated the national institution of religion. In his essay on *Puritanism and the Church of England*, he shows how resolutely and persistently, returning again and again to the attempt, the Puritans tried to get their Calvinistic ideas incorporated in the formulated doctrine of the national Church. They would not have objected to a State Establishment if they had been allowed to lay down the doctrinal basis themselves: it was doctrine, not polity, which was the main consideration. He does not deny that the "vigour and rigour" with which the Church of England strove to establish conformity and to press its formularies upon all sections of society accentuated disaffection and gave to Nonconformity its strongest excuse for separation. He contends, however, that the refusal of the Church to accept Calvinism, if it did not directly promote secession, made secession easier and more agreeable, so that the wrong suffered was greater in appearance than in reality.

"We could wish, indeed," he says, "the Church had shown the same largeness in consenting to relax ceremonies which she showed in refusing to tighten dogma or to spoil diction. Worse still, the angry wish to drive by violence, when the other party will not move by reason, finally no doubt appears; and the Church has much to blame herself for in the Act of Uniformity. Blame she deserves, and she has had it plentifully; but what has not been enough perceived is that really the conviction of her own moderation, openness, and latitude, as regards doctrine, seems to have filled her mind during her dealings with the Puritans; and that her impatience with them was in great measure impatience at seeing these so ill-appreciated by them. Very ill-appreciated by them they certainly were; and, as far as doctrine is concerned, the quarrel between the Church and Puritanism undoubtedly was, that for the doctrines of predestination, original sin, and justification, Puritanism wanted more exclusive prominence, more dogmatic definition, more bar to future escape and development; while the Church resisted." [1]

Where Puritanism, has, however, done unmistakable service is in the enforcement of the importance of con-

[1] In a letter dated November 13, 1869, he describes this essay as an attempt to "show how the Church, though holding certain doctrines like justification in common with Puritanism, has gained by not pinning itself to those doctrines and nothing else, but by resting on Catholic antiquity, historic Christianity, development, and so on, which open to it an escape from all single doctrines as they are outgrown. Then I shall have done with the subject, and shall leave it."

duct, as we saw in his treatment of Hebraism and Hellenism, though simply because it has concentrated its attention upon conduct to the exclusion of everything else it has attributed excessive value to what is, after all, but a part—though a great part—of life, and has thus encouraged in its adherents and descendants, the modern Nonconformists, a partial and unbalanced conception of life.

"Certainly," he writes, "we are no enemies of the Nonconformists; for, on the contrary, what we aim at is their perfection. But culture, which is the study of perfection, leads us to conceive of true human perfection as a *harmonious* perfection, developing all sides of our humanity; and as a *general* perfection, developing all parts of our society. . . . And while the Nonconformists, the successors and representatives of the Puritans, and like them staunchly walking by the best light they have, make a large part of what is strongest and most serious in this nation, and therefore attract our respect and interest, yet . . . our Puritans, ancient and modern, have not enough added to their care for walking staunchly by the best light they have, a care that that light be not darkness; . . . they have developed one side of their humanity at the expense of all others, and have become incomplete and mutilated men in consequence. Thus falling short of harmonious perfection, they fail to follow the true way of salvation." [1]

[1] Preface to *Culture and Anarchy*.

And summarising elsewhere the relative influence of Church and Dissent in the domain of intellect, he says:

"The intellectual action of the Church of England upon the nation has been insignificant: its social action has been great. The social action of Protestant Dissent, that genuine product of the English middle class, has not been civilising; its positive intellectual action has been insignificant; its negative intellectual action — insofar as by strenuously maintaining for itself, against persecution, liberty of conscience, and the right of free opinion, it at the same time maintained and established this right as a universal principle — has been invaluable. But the actual results of this negative intellectual service rendered by Protestant Dissent —by the middle class—to the whole community, great as they undoubtedly are, must not be taken for something which they are not. It is a very great thing to be able to think as you like; but, after all, an important question remains: *what* you think. It is a fine thing to secure a free stage and no favour; but, after all, the part which you play on that stage will have to be criticised. Now, all the liberty and industry in the world will not ensure these two things: a high reason and a fine culture." [1]

The best proof which he can offer to the Nonconformists of good-will is his desire to see them re-united on a broad and tolerant basis to the Church, but the toleration must be mutual, and the first step must be the

[1] Essay on "Democracy," in *Mixed Essays*.

abandonment of their claim to a monopoly of "Scriptural Protestantism." Their political Dissent, based on the condemnation of the Anglican Church order as "unscriptural," is a piece of speculative dogmatism which encumbers religion, and which has neither antiquity nor imagination to recommend it. Let Nonconformists concede that Church bishops are "a development of Catholic antiquity just as they have now followed Church music and Church architecture which are developments of the same. Then might arise a mighty and undistracted power of joint life which would probably transform the doctrines of priestly absolution and the real presence, would transform, equally, the so-called scriptural Protestantism of imputed righteousness, but would do more for real righteousness and for Christianity than has ever been done yet." [1]

Again:

"Certainly we consider them [the Puritans] to be in the main at present an obstacle to progress and to true civilisation. But this is because their worth is in our opinion such that not only must one for their own sakes wish to see it turned to more advantage, but others, from whom they are now separated, would greatly gain by conjunction to them, and our whole collective force of growth and progress be thereby immeasurably increased. In short, my one feeling when I regard them is a feeling not of ill-will but of regret at

[1] Essay on "Puritanism and the Church of England" in *St. Paul and Protestantism.*

waste of power; my one desire is a desire of comprehension. But the waste of power must continue, and the comprehension is impossible, so long as Puritanism imagines itself to possess, in its two or three signal doctrines, what it calls *the Gospel;* so long as it constitutes itself separately on the plea of setting forth purely *the Gospel*, which it imagines itself to have seized; so long as it judges others as not holding *the Gospel*, or as holding additions to it and variations from it. This fatal self-righteousness, grounded on a false conceit of knowledge, makes comprehension impossible; because it takes for granted the possession of the truth, and the power of deciding how others violate it; and this is a position of superiority, and suits conquest rather than comprehension." [1]

To him questions of doctrine offered little difficulty in the way of union so that the doctrine was not narrowing and exclusive in tendency. He would admit all doctrines, yet allow none to be supreme. "For me sacerdotalism and solifidianism stand both on the same footing: they are, both of them, erroneous human developments." But as the ideas and practice of the sacerdotalists contained much of value for the Church, so, too, with the ideas and practice of Nonconformists. He would therefore taboo neither, but allow to both free, spontaneous play, in the belief that thus a true and safe balance would be gained.

[1] Essay on "Puritanism and the Church of England" in *St. Paul and Protestantism.*

"Can anything," he asks, with admirable point, "more tend to make the Church what the Puritans reproach it with being—a mere lump of sacerdotalism and ritualism—than if the Puritans, who are free to come into it with their disregard of sacerdotalism and ritualism, and so to leaven it, refuse to come in, and leave it wholly to the sacerdotalists and ritualists? What can be harder upon the laity of the national Church, what so inconsiderate of the national good and advantage, as to leave us at the mercy of one single element in the Church, and deny us just the elements fit to mix with this element and to improve it?" [1]

And enforcing the same argument elsewhere, he says:

"All the faults of the Church come not from its being a public institution, but from its not being enough a public institution; but all the faults with which the Church is now reproached, its close dependence upon the landed gentry, its sale of livings, its disregard, in the choice of incumbents, of the wants and wishes of the people, its retention of worthless ministers, its over-ritualism and fantasticality, all are to be remedied not by making the Church a private institution but a more truly public one, and by pouring into it that large portion of the middle class, with its popular sentiment and its robust energy, which the Dissenters constitute. If the Church has effeminacy, they are the people to

[1] Essay on "Modern Dissent" in *St. Paul and Protestantism.*

do it good; if it has silliness and formalism, they are the people to cure it." [1]

The advantages of union would be reciprocal. While Nonconformity would be brought again into the full current of the national life, and beneath the play of all those forces of culture to which it has hitherto, to its own hurt, been too indifferent, the Church would "grow more vigorously towards a higher stage of insight into religious truth, and consequently towards a greater perfection of practice." The Nonconformists also could help by their signal proficiency in the art of preaching, and he even allowed that something of their habit of "free prayer"—if not carried too far—would be of advantage. Socially, too, the Church would gain, since by the infusion of a stronger middle and working class element her perpetual weakness and danger, that of being "an appendage of the Barbarians," would be counteracted.

"It is because I know something of Nonconformist ministers, and what eminent force and faculty many of them have for contributing to the work of development now before the Church, that I cannot bear to see the waste of power caused by their separation and battling with the Establishment, which absorb their energies too much to suffer them to carry forward the work of development themselves, and cut them off from aiding those in the Church who carry it forward." [2]

[1] Preface to *Higher Schools and Universities in France.*

[2] Essay on "Puritanism and the Church of England," in *St. Paul and Protestantism.*

The external conditions of union he would make as little grievous as possible to the Nonconformists. He would not ask them to abandon any one of their favourite doctrines—only to cease to believe that they possess a monopoly of the truth. Those who have scruples on the question of a State establishment he endeavours to reassure—now by serious argument, now by satire. Fools Arnold did not suffer gladly, but answered according to their folly. Hence to a staunch Nonconformist divine who once asserted with an air of finality that "he did not find anything in either the Old or New Testament to the effect that Christian ministers should become State servants, like soldiers or excisemen," Arnold replied, more convincingly, "He might as well have added that he did not find there anything to the effect that they should wear braces." Other countries, other institutions; other times, other methods—the principle of adaptation applies not less to churches than to braces. On the other hand, the serious doubter, who suffers from conscientious scruples, he ever treats with the respect which is due to him. Yet even he may use the ministrations of a State Church without harm to his soul. Let him keep inviolate all his reservations, but get from the Church the best it has to give him. He reminds him:

"People are not necessarily monarchists or republicans because they are born and live under a monarchy or republic. They avail themselves of the established government for those general purposes for which

governments and politics exist, but they do not, for the most part, trouble their heads much about particular theoretical principles of government. Nay, it may well happen that a man who lives and thrives under a monarchy shall yet theoretically disapprove the principle of monarchy, or a man who lives and thrives under a republic the principle of republicanism." [1]

But because a man cannot accept the principle of government under which he lives it does not follow that he should exile himself. Nay, more, he may, if he will, work for the advancement of his favourite political theories, while falling in with the existing order for the sake of those other advantages which would not be available at all without some settled form of government. So in ecclesiastical matters. Let the Puritan still adhere to his objections to Erastianism of every kind, yet at the same time throw himself heartily into the spiritual life and work of the Church. This life and this work are infinitely more important than any point of polity, and loyal adherence to the Church is compatible with the sincerest objection either to the State nexus or the episcopal principle. He would not impose upon Nonconformist ministers re-ordination as a condition of admission to the Church, for to "respectful treatment and fair and equal terms Protestant Nonconformity is entitled," and such a condition would rightly be regarded as offensive. At the same time he

[1] Essay on "Puritanism and the Church of England," in *St. Paul and Protestantism.*

saw no difficulty in the way of ordination being accepted voluntarily. Anticipating the objection that a bishop holds views which the Nonconformist cannot share as to the virtue of ordination, Arnold asks, "What can that matter unless he compel you, too, to profess his opinions or refuse you admission if you do not?" "But I should be joined in the ministry with men who hold opinions which I do not share," objects the Nonconformist further; and the answer is the same: "What does that matter either, unless they compel you also to hold these opinions, as the price of your being allowed to work for Christ's kingdom? . . . The office itself and his own power to fill it usefully is all that which really matters."

Arnold recognised, in fact, when he came to closer quarters with his problem, that no form of organised religion can be absolutely valid, but that a people's character and history must in the last resort be the true determinative. He makes light of a contemporary bishop's "allegation that 'episcopacy was an institution of God Himself,' an allegation which might make one suppose that in Genesis, directly after God had said 'Let there be light' (or, perhaps, even before it) He had pronounced, 'Let there be bishops.' There are plenty of true reasons for the existence of bishops without invoking false ones; and the time will come when thus to invoke the false one solemnly and authoritatively will shock public opinion."[1]

[1] *God and the Bible*, chapter iv., 4.

"Certainly," he says elsewhere, "culture will never make us think it an essential of religion whether we have in our Church discipline 'a popular authority of elders,' as Hooker calls it, or whether we have episcopal jurisdiction. . . . Neither the one nor the other is either essential or sinful, and much may be said on behalf of both. But what is important to be remarked is that both were in the Church of England at the Reformation, and that Presbyterianism was only extruded gradually. . . . Perhaps if a government like that of Elizabeth, with secular statesmen like the Cecils, and ecclesiastical statesmen like Whitgift, could have been prolonged, Presbyterianism might, by a wise mixture of concession and firmness, have been absorbed in the Establishment. . . . The temper and ill-judgment of the Stuarts made shipwreck of all policy of this kind." [1]

Improving upon even Dr. Arnold's toleration, he proposed, as a condition and principle of incorporation, that the Presbyterian form of government should be recognised concurrently with the Episcopal. "Such a Presbyterian Church would unite the main bodies of Protestants who are now separatists; and separation would cease to be a law of their religious order. . . . Culture would then find a place among English followers of the popular authority of elders, as it has long found it among the followers of Episcopal jurisdiction. And this we should gain by merely

[1] Preface to *Culture and Anarchy*.

recognising, replacing, and restoring an element which appeared once in the reformed national Church, and which is considerable and national enough to have a sound claim to appear there still."

The strongest objection to such a concession and to any *concordat* based upon it is, of course, that the same spirit of independence which affirms the right of the individual church to govern itself—a right which Arnold here implicitly recognises — would in all probability affirm the right of the individual church to determine its own doctrine and methods, so that all the potentiality of the old discord would be present in spite of the appearance of union.

It is doubtful whether Arnold strengthened his argument for Establishments in general, and the English Establishment in particular, when in later writings he resorted to the "cujus regio, ejus religio" argument, and conceived that a State Church became expedient or inexpedient according to the denominational division of the population. It was the peculiar case of Wales which drove him to this change of front. There he proposed that the adoption or rejection of Establishment should become a matter of local option. In towns where the episcopal form of religion predominated it should have the churches and endowments, and similarly where Nonconformity was supreme. It was, in fact, the method of the public vote—surely the most unsatisfactory of all mechanical methods of determining an issue which is, after all, one of political justice as

well as of religious policy, and a very descent to bathos when compared with his earlier "j'y suis, j'y reste" contention that "The clergyman is the one minister of Christ in the parish who did not invent himself, who cannot help existing." [1] To many it will seem that he gives all his strongest positions away when he says: "No one has a right to oblige you to say you approve of monarchy if you disapprove of it, or to conform to the Church of England if you differ from it; but you, on the other hand, have no right to prevent the majority from instituting monarchy or instituting a national church, and providing for them directly or indirectly, partially or entirely, out of public funds." [2] If the positions had been reversed and it had been a question of establishing and endowing a church pledged to the basis of "Scriptural Protestantism" Arnold would have had no difficulty in proving the majority argument fallacious; he would have taken his stand with the dissentient "remnant," and he would have been right.

[1] He writes so late as December 24, 1887 (only four months before his death): "The Liberal party has no idea beyond that of disestablishing the Church and secularising its funds, the old-fashioned Tories have no idea beyond that of keeping things as they are. I am anxious that the endowments should remain for religion, that the Episcopalians should keep the cathedrals, since in the cathedral towns the Episcopalians are in a majority, but that the Nonconformists, who are all of the Presbyterian form of worship, should have the churches and endowments, for that Presbyterian form of worship, where they are in a majority, as in many of the country districts."

[2] Preface to *Higher Schools and Universities in France.*

As for Ireland, rather than that the Episcopal Church should have been disestablished he would have been willing to see both the Presbyterian and Roman Catholic forms of religion established alongside of it, and to the last he protested that the Act of 1869 was dictated "not by the power of reason and justice but by the power of the antipathy of the Protestant Nonconformists, English and Scotch, to Establishments," though he did not recognise that it is at least possible that reason and justice may be at the basis of an antipathy. His ultimate scheme of comprehension, in fact, included Roman Catholicism as well as Protestant Nonconformity, though he recognised that "what may be done in England in our day, what our generation has the call and the means, if only it has the resolution, to bring about, is the union of Protestants." In truth, Arnold's sympathy with the Roman Catholic Church was as genuine as his sympathy with the Church of his birth, and in some respects it sprang from a deeper sense of affinity. He was alive to its credulity, but then did this differ qualitatively from that of Protestantism? He answers: "The mental habit of him who imagines that Balaam's ass spoke in no respect differs from the mental habit of him who imagines that a Madonna of wood or stone winked; and the one who says that God's Church makes him believe what he believes, and the other, who says that God's Word makes him believe what he believes, are for the philosopher perfectly alike in not

really and truly knowing, when they say *God's Church* and *God's Word*, what it is they say, or whereof they affirm."[1] Nor did he disguise from himself the intolerance of opinion which must be laid to the charge of the Roman Catholic Church, but here, again, he recognised that intolerance is a fault of all mankind more or less, and if mankind in general no longer shows its impatience of independent thought by persecuting and burning and slaying, it adopts the equally effective method of scorn and obloquy. "The Roman Catholic Church," he says, "loves criticism as little as the world loves it. Like the world it chooses to have things all its own way, to abuse its adversary, to back its own notion through thick and thin, to put forward all the *pros* for its own notion, to suppress all the *contras;* it does just all that the world does, and all that the critical shrinks from." Yet, in spite of all, Roman Catholicism appeals to imagination in a way that Protestantism does not and cannot, commended as it is by a longer antiquity, by a deeper understanding of human nature, and by richer stores of human experience, for the very name suggests "all the pell-mell of the men and women of Shakespeare's plays."

"The religious life is at bottom everywhere alike; but it is curious to note the variousness of its setting and outward circumstance. Catholicism has these so different from Protestantism! and in Catholicism these accessories have, it cannot be denied, a nobleness and

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, chapter iv.

amplitude which in Protestantism is often wanting to them. In Catholicism they have, from the antiquity of this form of religion, from its pretensions to universality, from its really widespread prevalence, from its sensuousness, something European, august, and imaginative; in Protestantism they often have, from its inferiority in all these respects, something provincial, mean, and prosaic." [1] So high was Arnold's opinion of the Roman Catholic Church, so confident was he of its perennial power of attraction, that he predicted for it, under enlightened guidance, a future infinitely more impressive than the past, and he never ceased to wonder that it showed no real perception of the possibilities of conquest open to it. "One must wonder at the fatuity of the Roman Catholic Church, that she should not herself see what a future there is for her here. Will there never arise among Catholics some great soul, to perceive that the eternity and universality which is vainly claimed for Catholic dogma and the Ultramontane system might really be possible for Catholic worship? But to rule over the moment and the credulous has more attraction than to work for the future and the sane."

Only in Italy did it appear to him that Roman Catholicism was decadent and without hope, because there it seemed "untransformable, unadaptable, used up, and an almost fatal difficulty to the country."

[1] Essay on "Eugénie de Guérin," in *Essays in Criticism.*

CHAPTER XV

NONCONFORMIST ORIGINS

I

ARNOLD'S ideas on Church and State, like his ideas on the doctrinal basis of religion, are suggestive rather than practically helpful. Here, too, his faculty of illumination signally asserted itself, bringing into prominence phases of the subject which are easily overlooked. It was not altogether his fault, however, if his plea for comprehension failed to convince the Nonconformists whom he had specially in mind, and whom he sought to win over to a more tolerant view of the Establishment. Nor, on the other hand, was the fault wholly theirs. What Arnold failed to appreciate is the fact that the sectarian divisions which make England from the religious standpoint so inexplicable a problem to the Continental student, as they are not the result of logical processes of thought, cannot be spirited away by mere abstract argument, however perspicuous. His conception of an established religion is attractive and inspiring, and broadly speaking it corresponds

with fact. "The consecration of common consent, antiquity, public establishment, long used rites, national edifices, is everything for religious worship,"—so he writes in *Culture and Anarchy*. Not everything certainly, but much—for these things appeal to the imagination, to sentiment, to reverence, to all the instincts of culture—yet if only much, the Church that is established, and speaks with a nation's collective voice, possesses an incalculable advantage over the independent communities of believers, united from assent to certain partial conceptions of religious truth or enthusiasm for special forms of government. Yet when so much can be granted theoretically, and human nature still persists in setting theory at defiance, the assumption is that the differences between Church and Dissent lie too deep to be sounded by the plummet of argument, and that an explanation of the existence of the thirty-three sects must be looked for in another direction.

It is a favourite argument with Arnold that Establishments are specially favourable to culture. That is unquestionably true, but it is far more true that culture is specially favourable to Establishments. "The fruitful men of English Puritanism and Nonconformity," he writes, "are men who were trained within the pale of the Establishment — Milton, Baxter, Wesley. A generation or two outside the Establishment and Puritanism produces men of national mark no longer." Granted, but how could it well have been otherwise so long as the Nonconformists were excluded from the

universities? That deprivation alone would explain the succeeding period of intellectual barrenness, apart from the fact that Puritanism, from the very sternness of its creed and the inflexibility of its temperament, drew to itself the less imaginative elements in the national life. The same elements in the Establishment would have produced no greater figures. "With the same doctrine and discipline men of national mark are produced in Scotland; but in an Establishment." Yet, again, not by virtue of the Establishment as such. Having a monopoly of the universities, the Establishment controlled the most effectual agencies of culture, and controlling these, it found itself ever at the heart of national thought and movement. "With the same doctrine and discipline, men of national and even European mark are produced in Germany, Switzerland, France; but in Establishments." This is also true, though to a less degree, but again the merit is not that of the Establishment, but is due to the fact that in these countries, infinitely more than in England, the established Church stood and stands for the totality of the nation. Even to-day Dissent is an entirely negligible quantity in all these countries.

Test the argument as we will, it resolves itself to this —that culture gravitates to Establishments, not that Establishments create culture; and for the very sufficient reason that people in the main adopt their religious beliefs and formularies from the very necessity of their mental constitution, rather than from delib-

erate speculation upon this abstract doctrine or that. Hence how explain the fact that so many notable figures in the English Church — men like Archbishop Tait and Bishop Creighton, to take quite recent examples from the prelacy, not to mention laymen of even greater celebrity—were reared outside its pale? Because such men came of Nonconformist parentage they are often spoken of as "products of Nonconformity." That is just what they were not. A product is the equation of all its factors, and a true product of Nonconformity will unite the intellectual and spiritual characteristics of the life from which he has emerged. But these men went out from Nonconformity because they were not of it, because its ideals and thought were not theirs. Equally they were not the products of the Establishment, to whose influence initiatively they owed nothing. They were simply the products of a culture which found in the Establishment a congenial home.

Throughout Arnold argues upon the supposition that it is religion which determines culture, whereas is not the truth this—that culture determines religion? Here, however, the word "culture" must not be accepted as expressing the narrow idea of education, but rather in his own, the true, sense as indicating the development of the totality of the mind and nature. In this sense, to culture belong, besides the knowledge which books can give, imagination, the sense of poetry, the sense for a just proportion of things, the full and clear mental

vision which enables a man in Arnold's words to "see life truly and to see it whole." And so it is not in fact the Establishment as such—that is, the "public institution of religion"—which attracts culture; even the polity, doctrine, and ritual which an Establishment happens to endorse appeal primarily on the ground of the antiquity and continuity which underlie them and the order and moderation with which they are commended.

It is undeniable that to the extent that an Establishment presents for acceptance a fixed body of dogma which in the nature of things is secure against continual and arbitrary interference the business of practical religion can better engage men's attention. On this point Arnold writes truly: "Establishments tend to give us a sense of a historical life of the human spirit outside and beyond our own fancies and feelings; . . . they tend to suggest new sides and sympathies in us to cultivate; . . . further, by saving us from having to invent and fight for our own forms of religion, they give us leisure and calm to study our view of religion itself —the most overpowering of objects, as it is the grandest —and to enlarge our first crude notions of the one thing needful." And yet if one were desirous of tripping Arnold it would only be needful to point out that on this very ground the principle of Establishment is opposed to that flexibility of doctrine upon which he lays such stress and for which it is the main object of his theological works to plead. An Establishment may

of set purpose eschew all extremes of opinion and belief, yet within the limits of the doctrinal basis chosen there is a necessary rigidity which is entirely foreign to the scientific spirit of open-mindedness. By the consolidation of theological dogmas within hard and fast official systems, inquiry is discouraged and checked, long continued sanction is often given to beliefs which, if left to fight for themselves, would soon succumb to the pressure of hostile evidence and of newer knowledge. To this extent the vital interests of truth are compromised and progress is retarded, while a further consequence is the setting up of a constant contradiction, varying in degree yet pernicious under all circumstances, between accepted doctrine and actual belief, a contradiction which inevitably tends to confuse thought, to weaken the sense for candour and honesty, and to bewilder the minds of the more devout, whose religious life is always stronger on the emotional than the rational side.

And theory apart, when one comes to inquire into the actual serviceableness of Establishments it is clear that unless certain fundamental conditions are complied with, the practical utility of a "public institution of religion" is small. After all, it is true, as Arnold himself has said, that "Christianity grew up in the Catacombs, not on the Palatine," and the truth of these words is applicable to all times and countries. A religious system, if it is to have reality about it, cannot be forced upon a nation from without: it must be the natural

expression of spontaneous instincts. But churches have nowhere, except to meet some special political exigency, been established for the encouragement of religion in general. On the contrary, the object invariably has been the support of some special ecclesiastical system or systems, and reasons of State, besides reasons of morality, have always had a determining influence, since of all disciplinary agencies, of all forms of assurance against social disorder and discontent, the Church is the strongest and the most effectual. The State may have benefited the Church, but the Church has returned the benefit a thousand-fold. But it no less follows that where a certain form of religion—be it Protestant or Roman Catholic—is instituted, as for the State concerned the right and expedient one, the entire theory of an Establishment is invalidated unless the Church so preferred and protected consistently professes and expounds the doctrines for which it stands.

As to the effects of the severance of Church and State where, as in our own country, the association forms so important a link in the chain of national history, it would be injudicious to speak too positively. Arnold himself never went so far as to predict any of those evil consequences of which the conventional advocate of Establishments has so vivid a consciousness. There is obviously a risk that the Church would lose in dignity and a still greater risk that there would be some weakening of the seat of authority, in spite of all that legislative safeguards might do. On the other

hand, what to the optimistic mind would seem the surest benefit of separation is the release of those large pent-up springs of spiritual energy and material sacrifice which under present circumstances find no outlet. Between them clerical autocracy, however moderately exercised in the main, and the inherited endowments of the pious founder stifle all spontaneity in the laity, while the Church's dependence on the secular arm cripples its freedom, restricts its power of adaptability, and so renders it less and less able to accommodate itself to the needs of a moving and exacting age. Disestablishment, again, would certainly prove a severe test of the Protestantism of the national Church, though, on the other hand, whatever defection might occur would be far more than counterbalanced by the accession of that large section of Nonconformity whose sole reason for remaining without is its objection, on grounds either religious or political or both, to the State tie. That religion itself would suffer is the least likely of all eventualities. So long as a nation is at heart religious it will never fail to give to religion all due recognition in its corporate life, while, conversely, the most elaborate public institution of religion becomes a hideous mockery when it no longer reflects national sentiment.

II

In his criticism of Nonconformity Arnold's most obvious weakness is a disposition to attach exaggerated

importance to the doctrinal foundation and diversities of Dissent. In his imagination the Dissenting minister passes all his time in expounding the doctrines of "Scriptural Protestantism," the Dissenting layman in hearing them expounded, and upon doctrinal differences he sees one sect eternally contending with another with the vehemence of Oriental fanaticism.[1] And yet the notorious fact of to-day is the acquiescence of united Nonconformity in all the old Puritan beliefs. Points of Church order and discipline, it is true, differentiate the various denominations, yet the importance of these would appear to be diminishing. On the other hand, points of Church order and discipline are within the Church the only points which afford to the rival tendencies a common footing, and for the rest, differences so great as to be past reconciliation exist—at the one extreme an Evangelical party accepting a modification of Puritan doctrine, at the other extreme a virile and aggressive sacerdotalist party which would probably accept Roman Catholic dogma in a body if only the Pope could be left out.

Granting, however, that the partial conceptions of religious truth which Arnold challenges in *St. Paul and Protestantism* are the theoretical basis of Nonconformity, we have still only discovered a *causa causata;* the *causa*

[1] "But, in a serious people, where every one has to choose and strive for his own order and discipline of religion, the contention about these non-essentials occupies his mind."—*Culture and Anarchy.*

causans remains to be fixed. And the *causa causans* lies deeper than any theological doctrine, deeper than any Church system—it lies, as has already been suggested, in human nature itself, in the entire mental and moral constitution of those to whom doctrine and discipline appeal with peculiar force. It is this mental and moral constitution which has created the spirit of Nonconformity, which has sent Nonconformity to its special doctrines, and has created its partial view of life. If the doctrines are narrow it is because the spirit is not, on the whole, a broad and generous spirit.

But above all Arnold ignores the intimate relationship between Nonconformity and the political education of the English people. Unless this relationship is borne in mind, indeed, Nonconformity cannot truly understand itself. Probably to this political education more than to any other cause is due the English tendency to assert independence in matters of religion. Comparing English people with other Western nations, this is surely characteristic of them, that their development has in a quite unique degree followed a political line; other nations have developed more than they on the lines of intellect, of science, of art; none has carried so far the political education of its citizens. The proof is that nowhere else in Europe is self-government so real and nowhere else is it practised, on the whole, with equal success.

Now it is of the nature of political education that it lays emphasis upon the idea of right. A people governs

itself not because it is convenient so to do, but because it has acquired the belief that it is its proper business, and only when the capacity to undertake self-governing functions goes hand in hand with the conviction that these functions belong to a man by virtue of his citizenship, and that the withholding of them is an infraction of his rights, does self-government receive the necessary inspiration and impetus. The consciousness of right and the disposition to assert it which have been so conspicuously developed in the English race, owing to its long schooling in political life, have naturally and even necessarily passed into the realm of religion. Into that realm have been taken also the spirit of independence which makes men laws to themselves and the spirit of emulation, rivalry, and antagonism which political life inevitably engenders. Hence when a man who has been accustomed to lay stress upon the abstract idea of right is urged to adopt a certain form of religion, he begins by asking himself "Why should I?" He is his own master: he is responsible to his own conscience, and he claims to act according to his own lights, however imperfect those lights may be. If, therefore, he cannot satisfy himself that this form of religion has a natural claim upon him, he refuses to adopt it. The passion for his rights as a man, and supremely the right to judge for himself and to act on that judgment which he claims and exercises in civil and political matters, almost prejudices him in favour of Nonconformity. The very idea of Conformity is an

impeachment of the liberty which he holds most dear—the liberty to do as he pleases. He will readily conform to the crowd and its thoughts and ways, for then he but imitates, and he has no consciousness of pressure; but directly control is exercised there is roused into hostility the instinct of independence,—one of the most manly as it may be one of the most mulish of instincts,—and let the institution to which he is asked to conform be as reasonable as it may, the very suspicion that his own will is being overruled by another outside deters him and makes him go another way.

Hence it is that the doctrines of the Church of England have no chance of being judged on their own merits. They are handicapped by a prejudice for which they are not responsible, and this prejudice is the fact that they are commended by legal sanction.

To the translation of this same spirit to America and the Colonies, and not a mechanical tradition of separation, as Arnold would have us believe, is due the fact that in none of these countries has the idea of the public institution of religion been seriously considered.

Thus, too, it is no fortuitous circumstance that the vast majority of Nonconformists profess the Liberal way of thought in politics. Moreover, since it is of the essence of Liberalism to assert individuality under the guise of liberty and equality, one would naturally expect those sections of the Nonconformist world to be the most closely identified with Liberalism which in religion most ardently cultivate the principle of

self-government and most strongly resent external control. And facts entirely fulfil this expectation. No body of Nonconformists are so entirely political and so consistently Liberal in sentiment as the Independents, who carry the principle of private judgment to the farthest extreme both in religious doctrine and in Church polity; while, conversely, none are so Conservative as the Wesleyan Methodists, who still retain outside the Church from which they withdrew a strong discipline and an effectual central organ of control.

To sum up, it is not by any means suggested that the doctrines with which Nonconformity identifies itself are not matters of sincere attachment, or that these doctrines do not form part of the justification for separation. What is, however, contended is that without a predisposition to separation the doctrines themselves would be inadequate to account for the vast body of Nonconformity visible at the present day, with its wonderful ecclesiastical machinery, its world-wide network of missionary and philanthropic agencies, and its remarkable devotion—carried in some cases to the point of idolatry—to its distinctive founders, creeds, and formularies. Doubtless the ardent attachment of Nonconformists to Protestant principles has of late years greatly accentuated the cleavage, but considerations which operate with special force to-day cannot be advanced in explanation of what took place ages ago. The contention of Nonconformity, in a word, has ever been for the right to live the life of its free choice. Whether it

is wise to live that life—whether the life tends to a harmonious perfection of nature—may fairly be open to argument; but the abstract right to choose it admits of no dispute, and jealousy for this right, as a right, has unconsciously operated, and still unconsciously operates, to a vastly greater degree than is supposed.

The subject is not one that can profitably be pursued in this place, but if the theory here expounded be correct the advocates of Church reunion should be able to derive from it a certain helpful guidance. One conclusion in particular they will not fail to draw: it is that since the spirit of separation inheres less in doctrinal differences than in mental constitution and habit, reunion cannot be brought about by mechanical methods. If the cause of diversity lies in human nature, upon human nature must the movement for unity act. In a word, reunion will come with a change of mind; this will unconsciously affect methods and attitudes.

Further, when one accepts this view as a contributory *raison d'être* of Nonconformity, it is no longer difficult to be charitable in judging that political activity and contention which to Arnold was the unforgivable sin. For since Nonconformity meant, for its adherents, the application to religion of the political principles of liberty and equality, it was inevitable that the more these principles became recognised and embodied in the common life of citizenship, the more Nonconformists were sure to rebel against the surviving privileges of

State Churchmanship and the surviving disabilities of their own order. That which to Arnold was mere perversity and pugnacity we can now see to have been in truth a perfectly natural and honest effort to readjust traditional conditions to a new religious organisation of society. Where an entire nation lives in unity of faith, neither privilege nor inequality can exist under uniform laws. It is different when that unity is hopelessly broken; then the whole civil and political system, so far as it comes in contact with religion, is thrown out of gear; and to restore harmony by the instrumentality of equalising legislation becomes then, on any rational theory of statecraft—by which is not supposed a party system based on the principle of getting all you can for your own side, and conceding as little as you can to the other side, irrespective of considerations of justice—the obvious desire of those who feel the pinch of inequality and the obvious duty of the responsible organs of government. There must be few people who will not heartily endorse Arnold's dictum that "Politics is a good thing and religion is a good thing, but they make a fractious mixture." Yet however undesirable be politico-religious contention,—of all contentions the least admirable and the least edifying,—fairness requires the admission that the initial fault or misfortune lies in the fact that religion should have been involved in politics at all. So long, however, as the State continues to interfere in ecclesiastical questions, and the Church regards the State alliance as seemly and advan-

tageous, so long will one of the sorest of controversies remain open and unresolved. Not only so, but the grievance is one which is bound to be increasingly felt the more political education develops and the sense of political justice deepens.

It was Arnold's conviction that the principle of religious Establishments would become more and more popular and that the Nonconformist sects would disappear before the broadening influence of a more dissipated culture; also that it was his special mission to bring about this result. In his "final word" to the Dissenters he says:

"Whether the Dissenters will believe it or not, my wish to reconcile them with the Church is from no desire to give their adversaries a victory and them a defeat, but from the conviction that they are on a false line; from sorrow at seeing their fine qualities and energies thrown away, from hope of signal good to this whole nation if they can be turned to better account. 'The Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion' have some of mankind's deepest and truest instincts against them and cannot finally prevail. If they prevail for a time, that is only a temporary stage in man's history; they will fail in the end, and will have to confess it." [1]

Again, writing on April 1, 1874, he says: "What follies the Church may commit one can never tell; but if the Church is prudent, and the Government gives it

[1] *Last Essays:* "A Last Word on the Burials Bill."

the reforms it requires, Protestant Dissent is doomed, in my opinion, to a rapid decline in this country."

Perhaps most of us have at one time prophesied with equal certainty upon some concern or other near to our sympathies—sometimes with accuracy. Yet however one may long for the day of religious unity, if it be true, as is here argued, that the roots of Nonconformity lie not merely in doctrine but in human nature, then the discords which every right-minded man deplores, yet which no one seems able to remove, will only cease when human nature is modified. That, too, is a possible process, but a process of slow movement.

Every one remembers the striking picture which George Eliot draws in her novel *Felix Holt* of the Independent pastor of Treby, the Reverend Rufus Lyon, the spiritual guide of a humble congregation "to whom the exceptional possession of religious truth was the condition which reconciled them to a meagre existence, and made them feel in secure alliance with the unseen but supreme rule of a world in which their own visible part was small." When on one occasion the excellent Mr. Lyon had the good luck to do the rector of the parish a service, and was invited to seek one in return, the first thought that occurred to him was to challenge the clergyman to a friendly debate on Church government, wherein the two were to discuss "first, the constitution of the true church and, secondly, the bearing thereupon of the English Reformation." He had no other idea, good man, than that the question of Church

versus Dissent was one to be settled by argument, and that the side which had the worst logic would as a matter of course acknowledge itself beaten and would for ever after hold its peace. As we saw in the chapter on "The Doctrine of Puritanism," Arnold makes the same mistake with less justification. He thinks that when he has demolished the theological basis of Nonconformity he has demolished Nonconformity itself, or at least that Nonconformity will gradually fall to pieces of sheer impotence.[1] But if we believe that the seed of Nonconformity germinated not in musty volumes of theological lore but in the human mind and will, and that it is at least as much a result of temperament and political instinct as of religious conviction, we shall both be less sanguine as to the precise date of the end of its domination over middle-class and working-class England, and less confident as to the means for transforming it and winning it to the high cause of religious unity. Optimism will thus be chastened, but at any rate illusions will be dispelled. Clearly the methods of compulsion, however insidious, will not avail, neither will the methods of blandishment, nor yet those of

[1] So he writes under date July 17, 1869, in reference to the Irish Church Bill, then before the country: "The Protestant Dissenters will triumph, as I was sure they would. But I am equally sure that out of the House and the fight of politics, I am doing what will sap them intellectually, and what will also sap the House of Commons intellectually, so far as it is ruled by the Protestant Dissenters; and more and more I am convinced that this is my true business at present."

suasion pure and simple. Episcopacy and Puritanism will come together when they think together, and they will more and more think together as they cultivate in common a conception of life which gives to each factor in life its proper place and keeps it there—religion, conduct, intellect, imagination, the æsthetic sense, all the faculties and instincts, all the activities and impulses of human nature, since life is made up of them all, so producing that balance and harmony which is the essence of true culture.

III

POLITICS

CHAPTER XVI

THE SCIENCE OF GOVERNMENT

NO greater mistake could be made than to go to Matthew Arnold's treatment of politics with the expectation of finding a laudation of party or class government from any standpoint. Those who confuse politics with the tricks of the wire-puller and the mechanism of the hustings must look elsewhere for encouragement: he, at any rate, has none to give them. Not one but all his political treatises might have been written for the express purpose of confounding all parties alike. His view of politics is that of Aristotle, not the American "boss." With him politics is the science of national government in the literal sense, and this science answers one of the most momentous of all questions—How can a nation best live, best develop itself as well as its resources, best attain to the completest civilisation? To him, therefore, viewed in this light, politics is a science both "true and noble." It is even the chief of all sciences, "because it deals with this question for the benefit of man not as an isolated creature, but in that state 'without which,' as Burke says, 'man

could not by any possibility arrive at the perfection of which his nature is capable'—for the benefit of man in society." And the capital need of man in society is that "the whole body of society should come to live with a life worthy to be called *human*, and corresponding to man's true aspirations and powers. This, the humanisation of man in society, is civilisation. The aim for all of us is to promote it, and to promote it is above all the aim for the true politician." [1]

It is a definition to give pause to the politician of common knowledge, the man who regards politics as merely a struggle, conducted in more or less urbane spirit, according to the character of the controversies and issues which happen to be uppermost in the public mind, between the "ins" and the "outs"; who, with Lord Beaconsfield's Coningsby, regards the possession of office as Government, the endeavour to possess office as Opposition, and the desire to possess it as Ambition. To help the politician of this type to a more ennobling view of society and of his place in it was Arnold's purpose in writing.

We shall only be just to his political opinions and theories, still more to his philippics—and these are not wanting, either in number or vigour—if we approach them with this idea clear and definite in the mind: that the conception of politics was for him one of the worthiest of conceptions, and that in interpreting it he looked beyond the petty antagonisms of party and

[1] *Irish Essays:* "The Future of Liberalism."

class, and took his stand upon the high ground of the national welfare as national welfare is understood, not by jealous parties and self-seeking cliques, but by culture.

In Arnold's political discourses,—still inconveniently scattered through a variety of books—there are certain words, to him of the greatest significance in developing a philosophy of national life, which constantly recur in all sorts of associations: such words, for example, as "civilisation," "expansion," "equality." By following up the usage of some of these terms we shall perhaps best understand his theory and ideal of political society.

What, then, is the purpose of society? For, that determined, we shall learn the true end of all rational political action. If there is one definition which more than any others would unite political parties, widely though they might differ as to other matters, it is the definition of this purpose as civilisation. It is even probable that if asked what they meant by civilisation, any two or half a dozen average party men, however different their political views, would have no difficulty in agreeing upon its concrete signs and manifestations. They would, the one as readily as the other, point to industry and commerce, to railroads and steamships, to the telegraph and the penny post; further, if Conservatives, to the Church Establishment and the House of Lords; if Liberals, to the political franchise and the free Press. Arnold would, on principle, deny to none

of these an influence in the furtherance of civilisation, due allowance being made for time and circumstances, yet he would contend that one and all touch but the fringe of the question, suggest the definition rather than exhaust it.

Civilisation is humanisation: a society is civilised when its individual members live, by whatever aids you will, for outward aids are but matters of machinery, a humane, a moral, a cultured life. From this point of view trade, facile means of communication, both physical and intellectual, even political and religious institutions, may, indeed, be factors in civilisation, but they are not so necessarily: their efficacy depends entirely upon their actual influence and results.

His conception of civilisation is thus essentially a spiritual conception. It is the constitution of the man himself, and through him of the society to which he belongs, which determines his and its degree of civilisation: all the rest is a matter of secondary consequence. If a society be truly civilised it will adopt the forms and habits and institutions best suited to the satisfaction of civilised needs; unless, however, it be civilised, the most scientifically devised of its laws and institutions will be but little to its praise.

Analysing the elements of civilisation, he gives the first place to the instinct of "expansion." It is an instinct which expresses itself in many forms—as the manifold conveniences and facilities of life, the love of liberty so dear to the Englishman, and, not least, the

love of equality so dear to his Gallic neighbour. Upon this basis of expansion all the other powers in a nation's life must work,—the powers of conduct, intellect, and knowledge, beauty, social life and manners, and the like,—and in proportion as these various powers are developed are men civilised.

"These are the means towards . . . civilisation; and the true politician, who wills the end, cannot but will the means also. And meanwhile, whether the politician wills them or not, there is an instinct pushing it to desire them and to tend to them, and making it dissatisfied when nothing is done for them, or when impediment and harm are offered to them; and this instinct we call the instinct of self-preservation in humanity." [1]

Again: "Human life and human society arise, we know, out of the presence in man of certain needs, certain instincts, and out of the constant endeavour of these instincts to satisfy and develop themselves. We may briefly sum them up, these needs or instincts, as being, first and foremost, a general instinct of expansion; then as being instincts following diverse great lines, which may be conveniently designated as the lines of conduct, of intellect and knowledge, of beauty, of social life and manners. Some lines are more in view and more in honour at one time, some at another. Some men and some nations are more eminent on one line, some on another. But the final aim, of making

[1] Essay on "The Future of Liberalism," in *Irish Essays*.

our own and of harmoniously combining the powers to be reached on each and all of these great lines, is the ideal of human life. And our race is for ever recalled to this aim, and held fast to it, by the instinct of self-preservation in humanity." [1]

The emphasis which he lays upon expansion as a condition of national development leads him to enunciate very decided views upon equality and inequality—one of his favourite political themes. His treatment of the subject follows to a certain extent the lines adopted in his consideration of culture, yet it is possible to reproduce his main arguments without travelling over old ground. "To be humanised," he writes in an essay on "Equality," [2] "is to comply with the true law of our human nature—*servare modum, finemque tenere, Naturamque sequi*, says Lucan; 'to keep our measure, and to hold fast our end, and to follow Nature!' To be humanised is to make progress towards this, our true and full humanity. And to be civilised is to make progress towards this in civil society."

But advance towards a full humanity means advance along different lines. The Hebrews advanced along the line of religion, and laid almost exclusive stress upon conduct as the highest good; the Greeks on the parallel lines of intellect, science, and beauty; and modern nations have taken one or other of these exemplars as their models. Thus the Germans have developed to a remarkable degree the power of knowledge,

[1] "A Speech at Eton," in *Irish Essays*. [2] *Mixed Essays*.

though "The power of knowledge . . . by no means implies, as is sometimes supposed, a high and fine general culture. What it implies is a strong sense of the necessity of knowing *scientifically*, as the expression is, the things which have to be known by us; of knowing them systematically, by the regular and right process, and in the only real way. And this sense the Germans especially have." The Italians have specially developed the æsthetic faculty, insomuch that in passing judgment upon a public spectacle the determining factor, even for the illiterate beholder, is ever its beauty or its ugliness. So, too, the French have cultivated the power of social life and manners even more than the Greeks of old. Hence it is that the French have developed an instinct of equality which distinguishes them from all other nations.

"The power of social life and manners is truly . . . one of the great elements in our humanisation. Unless we have cultivated it we are incomplete. The impulse for cultivating it is not, indeed, a moral impulse. It is by no means identical with the moral impulse to help our neighbour and to do him good. Yet in many ways it works to a like end. It brings men together, makes them feel the need of one another, be considerate of one another, understand one another. But, above all things, it is a promoter of equality. It is by the humanity of their manners that men are made equal." [1]

He goes so far as to contend that it was not the spirit

[1] "Equality," in *Mixed Essays*.

of philanthropy, nor yet the spirit of envy, nor the love of abstract ideas, which mainly impelled France to the Revolution, but pre-eminently "the spirit of society," which inevitably makes for the sentiment of equality—a bold judgment which suggests the question whether a true spirit of philanthropy can be entirely divorced, or divorced at all, from a true spirit of society, and whether the equality which Arnold specially admired in the French was not really the abstract idea, a consciousness of parity in inward worth.

On the other hand,—and this is Arnold's perennial lament,—England has developed neither the power of knowledge, nor that of beauty, nor that of society, but only the power of conduct. As we saw particularly in considering his criticism of Puritanism,[1] every one of the nation's characteristics betrays its advancement upon the lines of Hebraism,—its profound feeling for religion, its industry, its public spirit, its love of public order and stability. There has been gain in this different development of the national life and character, but there has also been great disadvantage, and chiefly in the creation in society of vast abysses of inequality. "But the need of expansion suffers a defeat . . . wherever there is an immense inequality of conditions and property; such inequality inevitably depresses and degrades the inferior masses. And whenever any great need of human nature suffers defeat, then the nation in which the defeat happens finds difficulties befalling it

[1] See chapter iv., p. 83.

from that cause; nay, and the victories of other great needs do not compensate for the defeat of one." In France, with its genius for manners and refinement, the most cultivated of men may converse with a peasant and find himself in sympathy, may feel that he is talking to an equal, while in England the same man is conscious, in his contact with the lower and even the middle classes, that a wall of partition divides them, that they belong to other worlds, with thoughts, feelings, perceptions, susceptibilities, language, manners, all different. The Frenchman admires and praises English liberty, public spirit, stability, prosperity, but the English life, with all his consciousness that conduct is not his own strength, he does not desire to live, so prosaic, dull, and unattractive is it. Worse still, the English people have settled into a positive love of the very inequality which is their greatest misfortune as a society, unconscious that it is a fatal obstacle to civilisation, to all advance towards human perfection.

And the effects on civilisation of this inequality—what are they? First, there has been created "an upper class materialised, a middle class vulgarised, a lower class brutalised"; the vulgarity of the middle class being proved by the complacency with which it tolerates inequality, the brutality of the lower class by the admiration and worship which it renders to the materialism of the upper.[1]

[1] Of the aristocracy ("Equality"): "Its splendour of station, its wealth, show, and luxury is then what the other classes

Further, there has arisen that intellectual estrangement between classes of which mention has been made in earlier chapters,—an estrangement without parallel in any other country. From the higher and educated classes the middle class are cut off by a law of iron necessity, and so they are thrown back upon their own inadequate and uninspiring resources; while, on the other hand, "the lower class see before them the aristocratic class, and its civilisation, such as it is, even infinitely more out of their reach than out of that of the middle class; while the life of the middle class, with its unlovely types of religion, thought, beauty, manners, has naturally, in general, no great attraction for them either. And so, too, they are thrown back upon themselves; upon their beer, their gin, and their fun." [1]

He comes, therefore, to the conclusion that flagrant inequality of condition and property entirely defeats a nation's instinct for expansion, and should, in the interest of civilisation, be discouraged. It was a conclusion to which, as we have seen, comparison of French life specially disposed him, and France he unquestionably had in mind when he wrote the following words:

"For twenty years, ever since I had to go about the

really admire in it; and this is not an elevating admiration. Such an admiration will never lift us out of our vulgarity and brutality, if we happen to be vulgar and brutal to start with; it will rather feed them and be fed by them."

[1] Essay "Ecce, convertimur ad gentes," in *Irish Essays*. The last words were quoted from a French critic of London life.

Continent to learn what the schools were like there, and observed at the same time the people for whom the schools existed and the conditions of their life, and compared it with what was to be found at home—ever since that time I have felt convinced that for the progress of our civilisation, here in England, three things were above all necessary: a reduction of those immense inequalities of condition and property amongst us, of which our land system is the base; a genuine municipal system; and public schools for the middle classes." [1]

That a great amount of material inequality is unavoidable he admits, and he will be well satisfied if the power to dispose of property shall cease to be absolute, seeing that the right to possess property has already been restricted in various ways. For though historical justification for our *latifundia* could once be pleaded, it now no longer exists:

"Their reason for existing was to serve as a number of centres in a world disintegrated after the ruin of the Roman Empire and slowly re-constituting itself. Numerous centres of material force were needed, and these a feudal aristocracy supplied. Their large and hereditary estates served this public end. The owners had a positive function, for which their estates were essential. In our modern world the function is gone; and the great estates, with an infinitely multiplied power of ministering to mere pleasure and indulgence, remain. The energy and honesty of our race does not

[1] *Irish Essays*: "Ecce, convertimur ad gentes."

leave itself without witness in this class, and nowhere are there more conspicuous examples of individuals raised by happy gifts of nature far above their fellows and their circumstances. For distinction of all kinds this class has an esteem. . . . But the total result of the class, its effect on society at large and on national progress, are what we must regard. And on the whole, with no necessary function to fulfil, never conversant with life as it really is, tempted, flattered, and spoiled from childhood to old age, an aristocratic class is inevitably materialised, and the more so the more the development of industry and ingenuity augments the means of luxury." [1]

It is characteristic of Arnold's dislike of political action, as somehow alien to the purpose as to the temperament of culture, that though admitting that "wealth, power, and consideration are—and above all when inherited and not earned—in themselves trying and dangerous things," and that it were better not merely for society as a whole but for the territorial aristocracy itself that an unlimited right to dispose of property should no longer be possessed, he was unwilling to invoke the aid of legislation. If, following his example, one were to adapt here the appropriate text, one might fairly say that while with the mind he served the law of progress, with the flesh he served the law of stagnation. Desirable though a radical change in the law of bequest is, he tells us, as his last word, that the

[1] *Mixed Essays:* "Equality."

question, after all, is not yet a practical one; there has not yet been a sufficiently free play of consciousness upon it; and for the present he would have it regarded as "a matter for the thoughts of those who think." The Barbarians may sleep soundly o' nights: upon their fortresses, of which the strongest bastions are primogeniture and entail, he for one has no serious designs. All he is concerned to do is to make them reflect; with reflection will come self-conviction; and they will then make haste to abandon feudal customs of their own will. Not every reformer of institutions is fortunate enough to please both parties at the same time—the Liberals by his arguments, the Conservatives by his conclusions. He asks: "Must not the working in our minds of considerations like these, to which culture, that is, the disinterested and active use of reading, reflection, and observation, in the endeavour to know the best that can be known, carries us, be really much more effectual to the dissolution of feudal habits and rules of succession in land," etc.? "In our minds," the Liberal reformer will perhaps reply; "but the thing is to get these ideas into the minds of other people." It was Arnold's belief, however, that it was only necessary to set a good principle in action and it would in due time work out all that he predicted of it, failing to recognise that consciousness, left to itself, is apt to be warped by the circumstances which play upon it, and play upon it at times so forcibly that freedom and spontaneity

have no chance of asserting themselves. Nor did he, with all his hatred of anarchy, make sufficient allowance for the fact that the passive policies of Governments unwilling or afraid to legislate in the interest of social harmony may be, in the worst sense of the word, anarchical. To proclaim the sanctity of social order is inconsequent unless at the same time care be taken to enforce the conditions under which order can alone be reasonably expected. A single hoary abuse, creating wholesale friction and discontent, may be infinitely more dangerous to the permanent interests of society than the most unmeasured outburst of popular violence. A sound principle, eternally true and eternally ignored, underlies Arnold's verdict upon Catholic emancipation, that "revolution by due process of law": "What was done in 1829 could not have the sufficiency which in 1800 it might have had; what was yielded in dread of insurrection could not produce gratitude."

Arnold's plea for some fairer approximation to equality is based, as we have seen, not upon any abstract theories of political justice, but upon the requirements of civilisation. That men have any rights in the matter, least of all natural rights, he denies. "So far as I can sound human consciousness I cannot perceive that man is really conscious of any abstract natural rights at all." A proposition so expressed can only prove that its author's consciousness is not the universal consciousness, for it is notorious that many other people have been led by reflection to a precisely

contrary conclusion. Whether they were right or wrong, the authors of the French *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* of 1789, of the Virginian Declaration of Rights, and the American Declaration of Independence held very positive views on the question. Arnold, in fact, subpœnas consciousness against itself, not recognising, though he sees it clearly enough in his treatment of theological dogma, that consciousness is variable with time and place, sanctioning at one time what at another it disapproves.

"Peasants and workmen have no natural rights at all," he says more pointedly in another place, adding, however, by way of counter-balance: "Only we ought instantly to add that kings and nobles have none either. If it is the sound English doctrine that all rights are created by law and are based on expediency, and are alterable as the public advantage may require, certainly that orthodox doctrine is mine. Property is created and maintained by law. It would disappear in that state of private war and scramble which legal society supersedes. Legal society creates, for the common good, the right of property, and for the common good that right is by legal society limitable. That property should exist, and that it should be held with a sense of security and with a power of disposal, may be taken . . . as a settled matter of expediency." [1]

In one of his letters (July, 1876) the same proposition takes the more general form: "For my part I do not

[1] Essay on "Equality," in *Mixed Essays*.

think that anybody has, or can have, any rights except such as are given him by the law," and he is unconventional enough to introduce the idea in a poem, *Human Life:*

> The joys which were not for our use design'd—
> The friends to whom *we had no natural right*,
> The homes that were not destined to be ours.

The political theorist who does not find the problems of society capable of this easy settlement may be disposed to object to all this generalisation being taken for granted. Very obviously the rights which man possesses, or at least exercises, in civil society are not all created by law: certain rights are exercised which the law might, indeed, intervene either to protect or to regulate, but which it cannot by any straining of words be said to create. The subjective right to live has never been seriously disputed, and if a right at all, it is a right whose justification lies in the nature of things, whether we call it a natural right or not. You may hedge the right round by all sorts of conditions, but the right was antecedent to the conditions, which in civilised society are only imposed for reasons of common, social convenience and advantage. Nor is the right to breathe fresh air, if a man be so wisely minded, a law-created right, yet it is tacitly regarded as not less indefeasible than the right to continue existence itself, and where the law touches it, it is to protect it as something inherent and fundamental, not to limit it. There

are those even who have claimed as "natural" the right to pursue the things (not necessarily to *possess* them) which conduce to happiness, since the instinct of happiness is one of the deepest implanted in human nature, and one the free exercise of which is essential to the full development of life, an instinct so spontaneous and automatic that it operates independently of all law; so powerful that nothing that law is able to do can destroy it.

To test Arnold by Arnold, however, if it is the purpose of life to attain the condition of perfection through culture, and life is only then entirely in accord with the scheme of nature when this condition has been realised, it is difficult at the same time to refuse the title of right to the collateral claim to live such a life and to pursue the ends which promote it, always subject to the limitations imposed by civil society for the common good. The "true law of our nature," Arnold tells us, requires man to humanise, to civilise himself. But a law of nature is something other and more fundamental than a law of civil society,—a right, duty, or obligation which derives sanction from the former law must inhere in man as man, and this sanction is precedent and superior to a sanction based on social consent.

Obligations, both social and personal, he does indeed recognise, but he denies any inter-relationship between obligation and right. "Now does any one," he asks in *Culture and Anarchy* (chap. vi.), "if he simply and naturally reads his consciousness, discover that he has

any rights at all? For my part, the deeper I go in my own consciousness, and the more simply I abandon myself to it, the more it seems to tell me that I have no rights at all, only duties; and that men get this notion of rights from a process of abstract reasoning, inferring that the obligations that they are conscious of towards others, others must be conscious of towards them, and not from any direct witness of consciousness at all."

But unless the obligation of one man is the right of those to whom it is owed, the obligation has behind it neither authority nor objective necessity. He takes specifically the case of parent and child: "It is unsafe and misleading to say that our children have rights against us; what is true and safe to say is that we have duties towards our children." But in admitting here the obligation of a father to a child, he goes outside his presupposition that all right has its origin in civil law. Responsibility to one's offspring is not moral because it is legal, but legal because it is moral—legal because recognised first by the individual, and afterwards by the collective consciousness, to be a duty of morality, lying in nature on the part of the parent, and so a moral right, lying also in nature on the part of the offspring.

It is perhaps fairest to Arnold and fairest to the subject itself to regard his sweeping dictum, "There are no such things as rights!" as the rhetorical flourish of a bold rather than an exact dialectic. The truth is that he viewed the question of rights too exclusively as one

affecting the domestic relationships of the Barbarians, and certainly he stood on firmer ground in referring the right to possess and to dispose of property—which, after all, was his immediate text—to purely social and legal sanctions. "I do not believe," he writes in *Irish Essays* ("Ecce"), "in a natural right, in each of a man's children, to his or her equal share of the father's property. I have no objection to the eldest son taking all the land, or the youngest son, or the middle daughter, on one condition: that this state of things shall really work well, that it shall be for the public advantage." This is a position which is nowadays pretty generally regarded as unassailable, and were the bearing of the question no wider, there would be little fault to find with either his reasoning or his conclusions.

Though Arnold was unwilling, as we have seen, to attack inequality by direct laws, he thought that a better balance might be established between social forces and interests by increasing the power of the State. He was, in fact, a State Socialist in a modest way after a fashion of his own. He does not, indeed, tell us how far he would go, for in matters of political practice he is in general tantalisingly vague, though he suggests that something might be done to counteract the disadvantages from which the poorer classes, in particular, suffer.

"It is evident that the action of a diligent, an impartial, and a national government, while it can do little to better the condition, already fortunate enough,

of the highest and richest class of its people, can really do much, by institution and regulation, to better that of the middle and lower classes. The State can bestow certain broad collective benefits, which are indeed not much if compared with the advantages already possessed by individual grandeur, but which are rich and valuable if compared with the makeshifts of mediocrity and poverty." [1]

No doubt much of his argument in support of State action has lost point for these days, but again the reader will do well to bear in mind that he wrote at a time when English politics were still under the influence of the individualistic school, whose shibboleth, "Laissez-faire," was still supreme in industry (though the Factory Acts had with much difficulty been pressed upon the manufacturing classes) not less than in education. The theory dominant was that no power or function should be conceded to the State which could by any possibility be withheld from it. That individual effort should have engaged in any sphere of economic life was regarded like the staking of a claim by the mining adventurer: a legal, vested interest had been established for all time, and the State was unceremoniously warned off. Nowadays the tendency is rather to reverse this theory, and to assume that collective action is *à priori* justifiable in any and every direction where it is capable of being applied, though such a contingency was very remote in Arnold's day.

[1] *Mixed Essays:* "Democracy."

And chiefly the State must be strengthened, since no class existing is capable of efficiently discharging the functions of government. The aristocracy, as we have already seen, he regards as exhausted for political purposes, the middle class as unripe, while the democracy, far from having shown capacity to rule, needs itself a discipline and a guidance which must come from an order of intelligence superior to its own. The conclusion is obvious—let all three classes combine to create a strong executive, armed with wider powers than it has hitherto been thought safe to entrust to the State. He ridicules jealousy of State action. For, after all, what is the State? It is not some body of men or some power outside the nation. In one sense it is the nation in its totality,—as Burke defines it, "the nation in its collective and corporate character"; in a narrower sense, and the one commonly understood in practical politics, it is the nation reduced to miniature for administrative purposes. In this latter sense the State is the nation's representative power, and its action is the nation's representative action. Hence for the nation to distrust the State is to distrust itself, which is only reasonable when the nation neglects to choose the best men to speak and act for it in the direction of affairs. "Hesitating, blundering, unintelligent, inefficacious, the action of the State may be; but such as it is, it is the collective action of the nation itself, and the nation is responsible for it. It is our own action which we suffer to be thus unsatisfactory. The conduct of our affairs

is in our own power." [1] In England especially he had no fear that the State would be allowed to usurp too many functions, or to carry the discharge of these functions to excessive lengths; and to the warnings against centralisation, bureaucracy, and the loss of individual liberty he attached little value.

"Ever since I was capable of reflection," he writes, "I have thought that such cautions and exhortations might be wanted elsewhere, but that giving them perpetually in England was indeed carrying coals to Newcastle. . . . Englishmen are not likely, you may be sure, to let the State encroach too much; they are not likely to be not lovers enough of individual liberty and of individual self-assertion. Our dangers are all the other way. Our dangers are in exaggerating the blessings of self-will and self-assertion, in not being ready enough to sink our imperfectly informed self-will in view of a large general result. . . . To use the State is simply to use co-operation of a superior kind. All you have to ask yourselves is whether the object for which it is proposed to use this co-operation is a rational and useful one, and one likely to be best reached in this manner." [2]

The objection that State help is a form of philanthropy, degrading to independence and manliness, he likewise ridicules. "Is a citizen's relation to the State that of a dependent to a parental benefactor?" he asks

[1] *Mixed Essays:* "Democracy."
[2] *Irish Essays:* "Ecce, convertimur ad gentes."

in *A French Eton*, and the answer is: "By no means; it is that of a member in a partnership to the whole firm." The objection has about it quite an old-world air of quaintness and oddity in these days, since it is the philanthropic rather than the partnership idea of the State which now holds the field.

Since Arnold thus wrote, in fact, the powers of the State have been increased again and again, and there seems every likelihood that the same course will be followed still further. How far the creation of a more powerful Executive has been accompanied by the growth of political responsibility in the individual citizen is an important question. What is certain, and profoundly necessary to be remembered, is that the enlargement of the sphere of State action can only be advantageous insofar as it is the spontaneous and natural outcome of a genuine State-consciousness in society. If "collectivism," to use the current phrase, be not rooted in a healthy and vigorous collective spirit, in a true sense of community, nothing in the world can save it from disastrous failure, for only on that supposition will any guarantee exist that it will not be made a mere pretext for relieving the individual of responsibility both towards the State and towards himself.

May Arnold be regarded as a social reformer? Using the words in a broad way, he unquestionably may. For he sought to permeate society with new principles of thought and action, which might act as solvents of the current conventional ideas, so transforming men's

minds and throwing them open to more rational conceptions both of society and of social life. The concrete forms in which transformed thought might express itself troubled him little. The main matter for him was that people should throw off the habit of mechanical judgment, and set consciousness free to look at things as they really are, and this done, he had no doubt that right reason, once given proper play, might safely be trusted to give all necessary light and direction. If, therefore, social politics in practice failed to enlist his energies, it was because he believed that a more rational theory of action was the urgent need.

Yet those who accuse Arnold of indifference to what are known as social problems do him an inexcusable injustice,—inexcusable because the disproof of their accusation is so easy to discover. One dare even assert that there was vastly more actuality and sincerity in Arnold's idea of social reform than can be claimed for most of the ostentatious schemes which hold the public eye. For he sought to base action not upon party interest or expediency, not upon political motive of any kind, but upon the requirements of civilisation, understood as the humanisation of the whole of society. And yet, while he had no specifics to offer to the masses of the people, he none the less recognised that a policy of social amelioration is the logical outcome of practical Christianity. His ideal was, indeed, the Christian State, yet not in the sense of seventeenth-century Puritanism, rather in that of St. Augustine, as a com-

monwealth whose political institutions were informed by the Christian spirit. Nor, great as was his dislike of Jack-Cadeism in every form, did he shrink from the prospect of giving to the poor a special preference in any future readjustment of the relationships between property and poverty. "Who cannot see," he asks, "that the idea of the common good is acquiring amongst us, at the present day, a force altogether new? that, for instance, in cases where, in the framing of laws and in the interpretation of them by tribunals, regard to property and privilege used to be, one may say, paramount, and the idea of the common good hardly considered at all, things are now tending quite the other way; the pretensions of property and privilege are severely scrutinised, the claims of the common good entertained with favour." At the same time he points out that the duty of pursuing the common good rests quite as much upon the poor as the rich. "Nay, the surest means to restore and perpetuate the reign of the selfish rich, if at any time it may have been menaced or interrupted, is cupidity, envy, and hatred in the poor. And this, again, is a witness to the infallibility of the line of Jesus. We must come, both rich and poor, to prefer the common good, the interest of 'the body of Christ,'—to use the Gospel phrase,—the body of Christ of which we are members, to private possession and personal enjoyment."

Ruskin has told us how it was the sight and knowledge of London's social enormities — its hideous

over-crowding, squalor, poverty, and misery—which sent him from art to human nature, and made him a social reformer against his will. It was London likewise which gave Arnold his text when there was a social moral to point, a social principle to affirm. "We are all of us included in some religious organisation or other," he writes in *Culture and Anarchy* (chap. i.); "we all call ourselves, in the sublime and aspiring language of religion . . . *children of God.* Children of God:—it is an immense pretension!—and how are we to justify it? By the works which we do, and the words which we speak. And the work which we collective children of God do, our grand centre of life, our *city* which we have builded for us to dwell in, is London! London, with its unutterable external hideousness, and with its internal canker of *publicè egestas, privatim opulentia*—to use the words which Sallust puts into Cato's mouth about Rome—unequalled in the world!" Words like these are one of two things —they are either the empty rhetoric of a dilettante philosophy or the sincere utterance of an ardent human sympathy. No one will misjudge them who has tried, with whatever success, to enter into their author's spirit, ideals, and scheme of life.

When, therefore, we are told that Arnold was no social reformer in the merely conventional sense, we shall do well to admit it, but we shall contend that he was more; for important though the function and high though the desert of the disinterested practical poli-

tician, he renders to mankind a still greater service who lays down permanent principles of action always applicable and always fruitful. To those who harshly judged his assumed lack of social sympathies Arnold might well have rejoined with Socrates that not obloquy but the honour of the prytaneum would have been his just reward.

CHAPTER XVII

THE PARTY SYSTEM

IT was inevitable that the attitude of detachment which Arnold held upon political questions would dispose him to think lightly, if not meanly, of party machinery, party ties, and still more of party shibboleths. "I do not profess to be a politician," he writes in his essay on "Irish Catholicism and British Liberalism," "but simply one of a disinterested class of observers who, with no organised and embodied set of supporters to please, set themselves to observe honestly and to report faithfully the state and prospects of our civilisation." [1]

When challenged, however, to descend from the Olympian heights of serene contemplation, he professes to a preference for Liberalism, though with reservations. "I am a Liberal, yet I am a Liberal tempered by experience, reflection, and renouncement, and I am, above all, a believer in culture." [2] He held that by party ties the true teacher of his age must not incumber himself; he must turn neither to right nor to left, must

[1] *Mixed Essays.* [2] *Culture and Anarchy:* Introduction.

have no prejudices and no tendencies; he must be one thing to all men—the impartial voice of wisdom and verity.

"The free spontaneous play of consciousness with which culture tries to float our stock habits of thinking and acting is by its very nature disinterested. Sometimes the result of floating them may be agreeable to this party, sometimes to that; now it may be unwelcome to our so-called Liberals, now to our so-called Conservatives; but what culture seeks is, above all, to *float* them, to prevent their being stiff and stark pieces of petrifaction any longer." [1]

The little we know, from his published *Letters*, of Arnold's *Lehrjahre* convinces us that the political instinct was then very strong in him. He tells how he attended a Chartist convention in London in April, 1848, and was "much struck with the ability of the speakers." The revolutionary movements which were shaking thrones on the Continent at that time had in this country a feeble echo in street rioting, innocent, however, of anti-dynastic significance. Yet to young Arnold, lately become private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, a member of Lord John Russell's Ministry, the political auguries of the time were startling enough. "It will be rioting here *only*" (as it was), he writes March 7, 1848, "still, the hour of the hereditary peerage and eldest sonship and immense properties has, I am convinced, as Lamartine would say, struck!" The

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, chapter vi.

more Arnold knew of practical politics the less he prophesied, and the less he trusted the prescience of Lamartine. How powerful was the attraction of politics for the budding publicist at that time may perhaps be best judged by the fact that it required a positive effort to keep out of print. "I was myself tempted to attempt some political writing the other day," he writes on March 10th of the same ebullient year, "but in the watches of the night I seemed to feel that in that direction I had some enthusiasm of the head perhaps, but no profound stirring. So I desisted."

Did his later controversial writing ever get beyond "enthusiasm of the head"; did a "profound stirring" ever come to him? It is very questionable. Politics came, indeed, to exert upon him a strong fascination, yet it is certain that in sober mood he never really loved a life which, do as he would, had always a tendency to bring him at least to the verge of that Jacobinic violence which he reprobated as the antithesis of culture. In a letter belonging to the middle period of his literary work, he writes (January, 1864), sobered by the reflection that he had just reached the patriarchal age of forty-one—"the middle of life in any case and for me perhaps more than the middle"[1]—"This treatment of politics with one's thought, or with one's imagination, or with one's soul, in place of the common treatment of them with one's Philistinism and with

[1] As indeed it proved, for he died, at the age of sixty-five years and three months, on April 15, 1888.

one's passions, is the only thing which can reconcile, it seems to me, any serious person to politics, with their inevitable wear, waste, and sore trial to all that is best in one." And again on May 24th of the same year: "One is from time to time seized and irresistibly carried along by a temptation to treat political, or religious, or social matters directly; but after yielding to such a temptation I always feel myself recoiling again, and disposed to touch them only so far as they can be touched through poetry." Even in 1864 his serious controversial writing can hardly be said to have begun, yet his true attitude to polemic of all kinds is unquestionably represented by these utterances. The more he found himself becoming a conspicuous figure in the arena of public debate, the less in reality he liked it. The "ordinary self" (to use his own distinction), susceptible to every human impulse and stimulus, to every point of contact with his fellows, and not by any means indifferent to the keen joy of combat and the consciousness of strength and mastery, urged him with irresistible force into the wrestlers' ring; the "better self" recognised the barrenness and futility of it all, and refused assent even where it did not dissuade and reprove him. As years advanced, he recognised with growing clearness that direct political controversy was not an element specially suited to his temperament or his intellectual gifts. "Things being in England what they are," he writes October 17, 1871, "I am glad to work indirectly by literature rather than directly by politics,"

and it was with a profound feeling of relief—perhaps also with a certain remorse for the pugnacity of his more ardent years — that he more and more left the field of combat to others.

And yet if Arnold lost by entanglement in political controversy, political controversy gained by the high virtues which he brought to an exercise which does not invariably draw out the best in a man's character: above all, by his absolute straightforwardness, his sheer, downright honesty, his unfailing instinct for truth-telling, even when truth-telling needed courage and offered the prospect of certain unpopularity. For he held in horror all temporising, all sophistry and playing tricks with the understanding, all sycophantism, whether its object were the Barbarians or the Populace, all pandering to men's lower tastes and instincts for the sake of momentary applause. "I have not that talent for 'blague' and mob-pleasing, which is a real talent, and tempts many men to apostasy," he wrote (April 8, 1884), when describing his first lecturing tour in America; what he had done was simply to utter his candid opinions both of his hearers and the things which concerned them,—"holding fast to the faith once delivered to the saints."

A man whose master passion was a love of truth, and the supreme end of whose thought was to get below all sham, show, and artificiality until he reached the solid foundation of fact, if fact there were, found much to criticise and even to condemn in the political

life and institutions which he saw around him. He was not in politics as in religion a setter forth of strange gods, yet to the gods of the Philistines, whether they professed the Liberal or the Conservative way of politics, he showed no reverence, for he knew them to be false gods, and their worship to be based in slavish superstition and error. Hence few shibboleths of party warfare evaded his relentless scrutiny. "England is the country of cries and catchwords: a country where public life is so much carried on by means of parties must be," he writes in *A French Eton*. But "It is good to make a catchword . . . come down from its stronghold of commonplace, to force it to move about before us in the open country, and to show us its real strength." That is what in fact he does. One by one he passes the current catch-cries in review, and insists that they shall either justify themselves or, failing that, shall cease to impose upon men's minds an authority which does not belong to them by right. Criticism like his is nicely calculated to ensure for a man the wrath of all politicians alike. It is not complimentary, and above all it is not comforting; and comforting even more than complimentary platitudes are what the public expects from its instructors.

There is public opinion. For it Arnold has but a mitigated respect, and his depreciation of its practical worth is pointed by all the impatience of the man of thought for the tyranny of conventionality. For what is public opinion, how is it formed, what are its

constituents—what lies behind? To Arnold "The chance medley of accidents, intrigues, hot and cold fits, stock-jobbing, newspaper articles, conversations on the railway, conversations on the omnibus"—to which he would to-day have added the lucubrations of the "man in the street"—are no very delectable material out of which to distil a spiritual essence, and if public opinion so formed, and public policy so guided, failed to impress him he may well be forgiven. "This," he writes in December, 1877, when he had little more to learn or unlearn on the subject, "this is what is peculiar to England and what misleads foreigners; there is no country in the world where so much nonsense becomes so public, and so appears to stand for the general voice of the nation, determining its government."

So, too, with the doctrine of the inspiration of majorities. A majority may, indeed, act rightly on a given issue, but it will not so do because it is a majority, but because reason happens to be on its side. It might as easily be with the minority, however, and the more complex the issue, the more it requires the exercise of a disciplined judgment and of tempered emotions, the greater is the likelihood that the small minority and not the large majority will find the path of wisdom and safety. Note his verdict upon the multitude in the essay on *Numbers*:

"It lacks principle, it lacks persistence; if to-day its good impulses prevail, they succumb to-morrow; sometimes it goes right, but it is very apt to go wrong.

Even a popular orator, or a popular journalist, will hardly say that the multitude may be trusted to have its judgment generally just, and its action generally virtuous. It may be better, it is better, that the body of the people, with all its faults, should act for itself, and control its own affairs, than that it should be set aside as ignorant and incapable, and have its affairs managed for it by a so-called superior class, possessing property and intelligence. Property and intelligence cannot be trusted to show a sound majority themselves; the exercise of power by the people tends to educate the people. But still, the world being what it is, we must surely expect the aims and doings of the majority of men to be at present very faulty, and this in a numerous community no less than in a small one."

Nevertheless, he accepted the party principle, with its correlative the rule of the majority, implying virtually the dictatorship of the Omnipotent One who turns the balance, as the best attainable in practice, though he held that any nation which consents to have its business so conducted must be prepared for plenty of "flaws in the work and warpings past the aim." He was even willing to see the franchise extended to the less literate, or more illiterate, sections of society in the belief that political experience would make them better citizens. As there is no royal road to administrative perfection short of the creation of a community of perfect citizens, it is at least a tolerable makeshift to let people learn the science of self-government by the

simple empirical method of "Try, try, try again." They would blunder, misjudge, miscalculate, yet by their very mistakes they would learn how to do better. Only let them remember that the poll-book is not the book of wisdom:

"Not that there is either any natural right in every man to the possession of a vote, or any gift of wisdom and virtue conferred by such possession. But if experience has established any one thing in the world, it has established this, that it is well for any great class and description of men in society to be able to say for itself what it wants, and not to have other classes, the so-called educated and intelligent classes, acting for it as its proctors, and supposed to understand its wants and to provide for them." [1]

Then there is liberty. No one esteems it more highly than he, but for that reason no one more deplores the misuse of it and the impostures which are perpetrated in its name. He refuses to regard it as a sign of progress that a nation should attach more importance to the unrestricted exercise of this right than to training itself to the proper understanding of what liberty really means and the conditions which alone cause it to subserve the purposes of civilisation. "Liberty!" exclaims the acrid Arminius, bored by the endless repetition of the word, in that feast of sweet and bitter things, *Friendship's Garland*,—"liberty to make fools of yourselves, and publicity to tell all the

[1] *Irish Essays*: "The Future of Liberalism."

world you are doing so." Liberty is not necessarily that, but the possibility always exists, so long as liberty is regarded as a fetish. Moreover, that there exists a fundamental difference between liberty and licence—"Licence they mean when they cry Liberty"—and that much individual self-assertion, which passes for a legitimate exercise of the national prerogative to do as one likes, is really in the highest degree anti-social and anarchical, are reflections which seldom occur to the man whose education has been political rather than intellectual. And so when a German (or other) monarch of the much-abused autocratic order declares: "The freedom of the single individual is conditional upon subordination to the whole; I wish for the German people freedom of thought, freedom of religion, freedom of scientific research, but not freedom to govern badly at will," the average Englishman, whatever his politics, since prejudice against foreign ideas effaces party differences, smiles indulgently and says: "Continental despotism! Such sentiments belong to the Dark Ages!" And so he regards the question as settled. His is the true land of liberty, and liberty consists in everybody doing as he pleases. One need not be hopelessly obscurantist to perceive that liberty in that sense is far from being a counsel of perfection. It was this idea of liberty which Arnold so ignominiously failed to commend to the respectful opinion of Arminius, the unbelieving, cynical Prussian:

"The truth is, he cannot rise to an Englishman's

conception of liberty, and understand how liberty, like virtue, is its own reward. 'We go for self-government,' I am always saying to him. 'All right,' he says, 'if it is government by your better self.' 'Fiddlesticks about our better self,' answer I. 'Who is to be the judge? No, the self every man chooses.' 'And what is the self the mass of mankind will choose,' cries he, 'when they are not told there is a better and a worse self, and shown what the better is like?' 'They will choose the worst, very likely,' say I, 'but that is just liberty!' 'And what is to bring good out of such liberty as that?' he asks. 'The glorious and sanative qualities of our matchless Constitution,' I reply; and that is always a stopper for him." [1]

The banter is delightful, of course, but beneath it all was the serious purpose of persuading his countrymen to put their stock notions of liberty to the test. Liberty in itself is a valueless piece of machinery, nay, it holds a potentiality of untold harm, unless directed by reason to the pursuit of intelligent ends. It was for Arnold himself that the same Arminius spoke when, from all the argumentation so freely adduced for his conversion to the conventional Philistine view of liberty, he only drew the conclusion that England's dangers "are from a surfeit of claptrap, due to the false notion that liberty and publicity are not only valuable for the use to be made of them, but are goods in themselves, nay, are the *summum bonum*."

[1] *Friendship's Garland:* Letter iii.

Coming to party attitudes more specifically, Arnold sees but one difference, though it is fundamental, between Liberal and Conservative: it is that the one appeals to the love of liberty, expressing itself in the unrestrained play of individuality, and the other to the love of order, taking the form of excessive regard for the existing fact. Yet because the appeal to the love of liberty is an appeal to an instinct healthy and commendable in itself, the instinct of expansion, while an exaggerated attachment to things as they are is contrary to that instinct, the elements of growth in the national life must always look for encouragement to Liberalism. "In general," he writes in *Irish Essays* ("The Future of Liberalism"), "the mind of the country is . . . profoundly Liberal; and it is Liberal by a just instinct. It feels that the Tories have not the secret of life and of the future for us, and it is right in so thinking. It turns to the Tories from time to time, in dissatisfaction at the shortcomings of Liberal statesmanship; but its reaction and recoil from them, after it has tried them for a little, is natural and salutary. For they cannot really profit the nation, or give it what it needs." Hence the movement must always be towards Liberalism, however invisibly, however imperceptibly, even though a Liberal party might not be at the head of affairs; for the spirit of Liberalism is the spirit of progress and life. Even the Conservatism of to-day is the Liberalism of yesterday; Liberalism has simply gone forward in the meantime.

With the concession of this theoretical truth, however, his praise of Liberalism is exhausted. Its impulses are right, its instinct is healthy, its main object and aim may be even more justifiable and necessary than it knows. Where it fails is in substituting for rational action a mechanical procedure and a blind worship of conventional ideas and phrases. The effect is seen in a harmful partiality of view, in the employment of means which defeat their own ends, in the prodigal expenditure of effort in return for very inadequate practical results. Further, while Liberalism to some extent furthers the instinct for expansion, that fundamental condition of civilisation, it neglects the other instincts,—for conduct, intellect, beauty, social life, and manners. Trade and industry are one of the most obvious expressions of the instinct for expansion, but when it takes this exclusive form it is apt, like the lean kine of Pharaoh's dream, to destroy all its fellows. There must be few who will differ from Arnold when he says that the typical manufacturing town, throb though it may with life and marked though it undoubtedly is by evidences of expansion of every kind, is a monstrous travesty of humane life.

On the other hand, Conservatism, if guiltless of the most obvious sins of Liberalism, commits others, and also suffers from limitations peculiar to itself. It has the aristocracy with it, as Liberalism has the middle class, and in the one case no less than the other the alliance is wholly disadvantageous. An aristocracy,

by the spectacle it affords of "a splendour and grace and elegance of life, due to inherited wealth and to traditional refinement," does indeed give satisfaction to the "baffled and starved instinct for beauty," and even to "the instinct for fit and seemly forms of social intercourse and manners," yet here its civilising mission ceases. "To the instinct for intellect and knowledge, the aristocratic class and its agents, the Tory statesmen, give no satisfaction at all. To large and clear ideas of the future and of its requirements, whether at home or abroad, aristocracies are by nature inaccessible; and though the firmness and dignity of their carriage, in foreign affairs, may inspire respect and give satisfaction, yet even here, as they do not see how the world is really going, they can found nothing. . . . And, finally, to the instinct of the great body of the community for expansion they are justly felt to be even averse, insofar as the very first consideration with them as a class — a few humane individuals amongst them, lovers of perfection, being left out of account—is always 'the maintenance of our traditional, existing social arrangements.'" [1]

In fine, the main thing, both for Liberal and Conservative, is not to work blindly at cut and dried schemes, based on mechanical party principles, irrespective of what reason and consciousness have to say on the subject. Rather let these schemes be laid open to the full play of thought; let reason probe to the

[1] *Irish Essays*: "The Future of Liberalism."

roots of human motive and action, in order that we may get to know things as they really are, and on the basis of this knowledge we may hope to create,—not indeed, even then, full-fledged projects of world-regeneration, but a frame of mind out of which wise and fruitful reforms may gradually grow. "A slow and tedious process, yours—always thinking, never doing," the practical man of action is apt to say; "why cannot we go straight for our goal?" "Slow indeed and tedious," Arnold would answer, "but that is the inevitable way of nature. Thought must come first, and it will not be hurried. Before you decide to go straight for your goal, be sure where your goal is and that the goal is the right one. Here action, however vigorous and rigorous, will not help you, only reflection, and the more deliberate and cautious reflection is, the less likelihood of wasted effort, when the time for effort comes." Flexibility of mind and patience are thus the qualities which Arnold most desires for the politician, and he laments that "the nice sense of measure is certainly not one of Nature's gifts to her English children." [1] "Toutes les questions sont des questions de plus ou de moins," he writes in one of his Notebooks, and the principle accurately defines his attitude to political controversy of all kinds. He had grasped the fact that the true political philosophy is that which proceeds from the assumption that politics has to do, not with irreconcilable antinomies and an-

[1] Essay on *The French Play in London.*

tagonisms, but with complementary principles, merging into each other by imperceptible gradations, and that balance and harmony in social life can only be secured when in the application of these principles reason takes the place of routine and toleration the place of asperity.

CHAPTER XVIII

NATIONALITY AND RELIGION

A LACK of the sense for practical affairs and hence a constitutional inability to afford safe direction through the labyrinth of politics have, with little justification, been alleged against Matthew Arnold, and alleged with such assumption of certitude that the reader who goes to him with prejudiced mind may be apt, in sheer reaction, to estimate his political philosophy and prescience even beyond their deserts. Few men who have influenced public thought during the past generation have realised with equal clearness the vital part which religion plays in the problem of the government of nations, and none has approached that problem in relation to Ireland in a truer spirit of liberality and broad-mindedness. "'All roads,' says the proverb, 'lead to Rome,' and one finds in like manner that all questions raise the question of religion. . . . Questions of good government, social harmony, education, civilisation, come forth and ask to be considered; and very soon it appears that we cannot possibly treat them without returning to treat of re-

ligion." So he writes in his essay on *Irish Catholicism and British Liberalism*. The same conviction of the direct bearing of religion upon the amenity of social life which prompted his attack upon the Puritan outposts of English Philistinism led him also to seek in the transformation of Roman Catholic education in Ireland the solution of the problem of Home Rule.

In touching this question I am conscious of a dangerous contact with issues which still retain an unhappy capacity for disharmony, a capacity not merely to divide but to inflame men's minds, with issues which might seem fated to demonstrate how partial is the influence of the spirit of accommodation even in the political life of a country whose very constitution is a patchwork of compromises. Yet injustice would be done to Arnold's scheme of public policy if his attitude towards the still open questions of Irish government and Roman Catholic education, controversial though they are, were quite ignored.

There are open to Protestants two ways of judging Roman Catholicism; we may call them variously the conventional and the rational, or the polemical and the historical. The one way is to regard Roman Catholicism dogmatically as a system of folly, superstition, and fraud, to assume that a religion which traces an unbroken chain of continuity back to the remotest period of organised Christianity, and which now offers all the hope, light, guidance, and consolation they receive in life to the vast majority of Christian believers, is rooted

in immeasurable error and falsity; hence that all the good it has done in the world, all the saintly lives it has produced, all the sacred literature, all the sacrifice and effort, all the wonderful system of religious and philanthropic works and institutions it has called into being,—that these all owe their inspiration to a gigantic imposture. That is one judgment of Roman Catholicism and the Roman Catholic Church, and it is held to-day as tenaciously, if not as widely and as openly, as in the days of Puritan ascendency, and of course amongst the modern representatives of that type of religious thought.

If one were to mete to those who hold this view their own justice, it would be necessary to call this the specifically atheistic view, since it implies the denial of Divine Providence in the regulation of mankind's spiritual concerns.

The other view as little attributes to Roman Catholicism the possession of absolute truth as it attributes to it a basis of absolute error. Regarding Roman Catholicism as a historical expression of Christianity equally valid with Protestantism,—as "an essay in religion," "an approximation," to use Arnold's recurring phrases,—it respects its great world-mission and reveres its antiquity on the one hand, yet on the other hand it recognises that it has, as from the fact of its antiquity was inevitable, gathered around it and retained more credulity and fallacy than incumbers the rival faith. Judging Roman Catholicism as a factor of the utmost

moment in civilisation, it notes how it has met the needs of countless generations of men and women in a way which no other religion could have done, and that to-day, as in the most distant past, its special place in the world is created for it by the persistence of those intellectual and spiritual characteristics to which the Roman Church ministers with peculiar efficacy.

It was natural that a man of Arnold's breadth of culture should see Roman Catholicism from its best and most winning side, and that, while under no delusions either as to its strong or its weak points, he should be fully conscious of its significance as a religious force. "We shall always appear insolent and unjust in the sight of a religion's adherents, so long as we look at it from the negative side only, and not on that attractive side by which they see it themselves." This admirable principle, which he lays down in the Preface to his book upon the Higher Schools of France, he never forgot when judging Roman Catholicism. He complains, indeed, that Protestants too often regard "what is prodigious, mischievous, impossible in Catholicism rather than what is natural, amiable, likely to endure. It is by this natural and better side that we should accustom ourselves to consider Catholicism, and we cannot conceive this side too simply." What in Roman Catholicism specially appealed to him were the tradition of unity which it represents, its singular charm for the heart and the imagination, its strong hold upon the human conscience, and its peculiar susceptibility to the claims

of vice and misery. Hence "whoever treats Catholicism as a nuisance, to be helped to die out as soon as possible, has the heart, the imagination, and the conscience of Catholics in just revolt against him." And if Roman Catholicism could be justly accused more than Protestantism of superstition, it could bear the reproach without flinching as it remembered that its special charge and care have been the poor and the unlearned.

"Catholicism is that form of Christianity which is fullest of human accretions and superstitions, because it is the oldest, the largest, and the most popular. It is the religion which has most reached the people. It has been the great popular religion of Christendom, with all the accretions and superstitions inseparable from such a character. The bulk of its superstitions come from its having really plunged so far down into the multitude, and spread so wide among them. If this is a cause of error, it is also a cause of attachment. Who has seen the poor in other churches as they are seen in the Catholic churches? Catholicism, besides, enveloped human life, and Catholics in general feel themselves to have drawn not only their religion from the Church, they feel themselves to have drawn from her, too, their art and poetry and culture." [1]

Holding this wide and tolerant view, he had no difficulty in recognising both the justice and the policy of allowing the Roman Catholics of Ireland to be educated in their own way. In his day (as before and ever

[1] *Mixed Essays*: "Irish Catholicism and British Liberalism."

since), it was Protestant jealousy of Roman Catholic influence, Protestant questioning of Catholicism's very right to exist, which barred the way, though Arnold flagrantly erred in identifying the opposition with Liberalism and Nonconformity exclusively and in limiting it to the middle class. Protestants then as now frankly agreed that one of Ireland's greatest misfortunes was the lack of an efficient system of education, but they insisted that if this lack was to be supplied it must be supplied according to Protestant ideas of what education should be, whether the Catholics were satisfied or not. But to take a horse to the water is not to make him drink. The one insuperable objection to Irish educational reform on Protestant lines was that the schools and colleges which the Protestants were prepared to create the Roman Catholics were not prepared to use.

Here was an *impasse*, and Arnold's way of overcoming it was simplicity itself: give the Catholics the schools they want. To him any other alternative seemed absurd. He pleaded for "the equitable treatment of Catholicism"—that and no more. He desired that Ireland should have "public schools and universities suited to Catholics, as England has public schools and universities suited to Anglicans, and Scotland such as are suited to Presbyterians." In the first place he would give to Roman Catholics their due share in the endowments of the old secondary schools, and this act of restitution he would supplement by a State subsidy,

so creating an ample fund out of which to provide a really efficient system of schools suited to the requirements of the middle class. Beyond this, however, he would give them a university of their own, just as the Protestants of Ireland have Trinity College, the Protestants of England have Oxford and Cambridge, and as the Roman Catholics of Rhineland have a theological faculty at Bonn; and this university should be taught exclusively by Roman Catholic professors and so be invested with a Roman Catholic atmosphere.[1]

[1] The universities of Tübingen, Breslau, and Strasburg, as well as Bonn, have Catholic and Protestant faculties for theology. Arnold frankly admits (in the Preface to his essay on the *Higher Schools and Universities of France*) his inability to judge of the success of the German dual system. "I speak with caution, because in the first place a foreigner cannot well have a thorough knowledge of the circumstances; and in the second place what is right and reasonable does not always succeed, as the best judgment of the ablest statesman may fail to hit truly what is right and reasonable," etc. It is only fair to point out that, whatever the merits of this arrangement, it is not even yet universally accepted in Germany as satisfactory. In the course of a debate in the German Reichstag on March 2, 1903, upon the action of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Treves in instructing his clergy to refuse absolution to all parents who sent their daughters to the State high school of the town, on the ground that it was not an exclusively Catholic institution, though fourteen out of the twenty-two teachers were Roman Catholics, the leader of the Liberal party stated: "The establishment of the Catholic faculty of theology at the university of Strasburg was a triumph of the Church over the State, and the Church has even obtained the right to depose the professors." As a result of representations made by the Government to Rome, the episcopal decree of excommunication was unreservedly withdrawn.—Vide *The Times* for March, 1903.

As in England his desire was to bring Nonconformity into the open, so also with Roman Catholicism in Ireland. It had been the bane of Ireland that Roman Catholicism had there been treated as pariah and dissociated from the national life, yet it had grown all the stronger for this very treatment, proving conclusively that disregard, narrowness, and harshness were the most ineffectual of all instruments to employ against it. He desired, therefore, to try instead the way of conciliation, enlightenment, and liberality. To those who declaimed against Roman Catholic superstition he replied: Then the one way to dispel this superstition is to educate the people, so on your own ground to object to the Catholics having schools and a university of their own is to perpetuate the very credulity which offends you.

"If we want the Irish to be less superstitious, less priest-governed, less Ultramontane, let us do what is likely to serve this end. The Irish will use Catholic schools and no other. Let us give them secondary and higher Catholic schools with a public character."

One demand of Roman Catholicism he was resolute in opposing. While prepared to deal generously with the proposed university in every way, he was not willing to place it under the rule of the bishops. A national university it should be, and national therefore should be its government. His idea was that the State, acting as proctor for the nation, should appoint

and remove all professors, who, though Roman Catholics, should be chosen not for their pliancy to episcopal pressure, but for their scholarship. "Only with such a condition can the State fairly and rightly bestow a university," but that safeguard secured, he would let the university go its own way. He was not, indeed, unconscious that a certain menace was offered to the State by the political pretensions of the Roman Catholic Church. These pretensions, like the superstitions in her dogma, he held to be serious hindrances to civilisation, yet he believed they would be less dangerous in proportion as the country had good education, good government, and contentment. The very way to strengthen Ultramontanism was to continue Ireland's backwardness in enlightenment and liberty.

"The national sense, in a free and high-spirited nation, may be trusted to assert itself, as time goes on, against that dependence on a government of foreiguers, that meddling and intrigue by a government of foreigners, which is what the Ultramontane system, judged by practice, not theory, is seen really to bring with it." "What keeps Irish Catholicism Ultramontane?" he asks in one place; and his answer is, "Our policy and our policy only." Yet it is notorious that Ultramontanism is nowhere more irreconcilable than in Prussia, where the State endeavours at every turn to hold the balance fairly between the two confessions, and in nothing more studiously than in public education. Here, however, Arnold's optimism and his faith

in the power of a reasonable principle disarmed all apprehension. It was also his conviction that Ultramontanism, extreme sacerdotalism, and superstition once removed from the Roman Catholic Church, as he believed they would be with the development of a healthy national spirit and the growth of intelligence, all that constituted the true individuality of Catholicism, all that made its true power (which least of all was dogma), would remain: for it would retain "the beauty, the richness, the poetry, the infinite charm for the imagination of its own age-long growth, a growth unconscious, popular, profoundly rooted, all-enveloping."

So the question stood when Arnold first discussed it nearly forty years ago, so it stood when he left it after hard writing to no purpose, and so it stands to-day. Here, at any rate, the free play of consciousness has lamentably failed to produce conviction. Many of the first combatants have disappeared, but the controversy goes on as before, on the same stage, with the same arguments, in the same spirit of inflexibility on both sides. Ireland has, indeed, shared to some extent in the modest and not over-frequent improvements which have been introduced into the primary school system, but she still remains the worst educated part of the kingdom, and the Roman Catholic university for which Arnold pleaded is still being debated by Parliaments and Royal Commissions. And a political watch-cry, a conventional phrase, whose chief claim to respect is its

antiquity, alone bars the way. Arnold thus refers to it in one of his essays:

"In England and Scotland Protestants choose to make their universities places where their children can learn theology, philosophy, and history, and can learn them as Protestants; why may not Roman Catholics do the same where they are the bulk of the population? And in Germany they may, but in Ireland they are told by the English Government: Oh, no, that is impossible; we have a *principle* that for the future we must not, in Ireland, endow religion in any way whatever." [1]

Yet, in truth, the difficulty is not one of principle at all, for the same endowment of religion is practised and approved in the case of the training colleges and elementary schools in all the three kingdoms, every penny of public subsidy to which is in logical conflict with a contention which is, after all, little more than hair-splitting pedantry. And, besides, it is not a question in Ireland of inflicting injustice upon one religion by granting to the other special facilities for proselytism; but, on the contrary, of assisting a perfectly homogeneous community to educate itself, and no one else, in the spirit of its own faith. Moreover, the argument that the State should have no special religion, or at best should only show in religion a platonic interest, proves itself on examination barren and inconclusive. For what is the foremost purpose of the State? Not to realise certain abstract principles of political philoso-

[1] Preface to *Higher Schools and Universities in France.*

phy, however idealistic they may be, but, returning to Arnold's first definition, to humanise man in society, and to adopt the aids and institutions most likely to effect that end. From this standpoint religion is an auxiliary of the utmost value, the active co-operation of which is more important for the State than the assertion of the most perfect theory of civil right.

Those who rightly claim for education that it should be the supreme unifier and conciliator are bound to admit that sectional colleges cannot serve the highest interests of education, yet on grounds of civil equality the Roman Catholics are clearly entitled to say: "Give us the portion of taxation that falls to our share," and to go with that into the far country of isolation, if they are so minded. Their claim is in effect: "We ask that our religion may be taught to us as a part—and just to the extent that we are a part—of the State, since education has been declared to be a public function and education without religion is one-sided and incomplete." No one will question the competency of any individual citizen, or group of citizens, to renounce such a claim; but the fact that one man says "I do not seek this right myself" does not justify him in saying that no one else shall exercise it. In practice, therefore, the issue narrows itself down to this—shall Ireland be permitted to remain a deficiently educated country in order that a conventional theory of English politics, which has neither reason nor logic nor equity behind it, shall be perpetuated?

Arnold's attitude on the question of self-government need not detain us, since recent legislation has given effect to the most important of the measures which he advocated years ago. His general verdict upon England's treatment of Ireland is pretty universally accepted in these days as true to fact. A political homily which he once preached from the text, "Whatsoever things are true . . . just . . . amiable," etc., forcibly pointed out wherein, in his opinion, lay the cause of England's failure to conciliate Ireland. Past want of justice and even more past want of amiability were the fatal results.

"The failure in amiability, too, is a source of danger and insecurity to States, as well as the failure in justice. And we English are not amiable, or at any rate, what in this case comes to the same thing, do not appear so. The politicians never thought of that! Quite outside their combinations lies this hindrance, tending to make their most elaborate combinations ineffectual. Thus the joint operation of two moral causes together — the sort of causes which politicians do not seriously regard — tells against the designs of the politicians with what seems to be an almost inexorable fatality. If there were not the failure in amiability, perhaps the original failure in justice might by this time be got over; if there had not been the failure in justice, perhaps the failure in amiability might not have mattered much. The two failures together create a difficulty almost insurmountable." [1]

[1] Essay on "Numbers" in *Discourses in America*.

"Almost insurmountable!" He never withdrew the qualification, for hopeful as he was of the transformation of Ireland's national religion, of the transformation of her social and political life he well-nigh despaired. And the root of the difficulty lay in the obstinate refusal of the governing classes, and still more of the people who placed the power in their hands—the English middle class, narrow, complacent, immobile in mind—to look at the question of Ireland from the Irish standpoint, to make due allowance for racial, religious, and economic peculiarities, in a word, to "judge righteous judgment!" In his words: "The opinion and sentiment of our middle class controls the policy of our statesmen towards Ireland. That policy does not represent the real mind of our leading statesmen, but the mind of the British middle class controlling the action of statesmen." A passage in a letter of December 27, 1881, bears specially upon this aspect of the question.

"For my part," he there writes, "the immense revolution which is actually in progress in Ireland, and which is before us in England too, though it has not actually commenced, carries me back continually to the great Hebrew prophets, with their conviction, so distasteful to the rulers and politicians of their times, of the inevitability of a profound revolution; their conviction, too, of the final emergence of a better state of things. 'O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and

thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.' The world is always thinking that the 'peace as a river' is to be had without having 'hearkened to the commandment,' but the prophet knows better."

After all, it may be said, this is but prophecy after the event. Yet at any rate it may be claimed for Arnold that he opened his eyes to the light before the majority of politicians of either party. He, at any rate, "never affected to be either surprised or indignant at the antipathy of the Irish to us," and while he had grave doubts as to the wisdom of Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill, he dreaded a policy of inaction and "drift" on the other side. "The fatal thing at this moment," he writes on October 21, 1886, "is drifting. And the stale old hacks always love to talk plausibly and to drift.[1] I do not wish to have anarchy in Ireland or to disestablish the Church of England; but Lord Clanricarde as an Irish landlord and Lord Lonsdale as the patron of forty livings have become impossible. They must be seriously dealt with. The old hacks want still to leave them as they are, to talk plausibly about them, and to drift." His idea was to give at once a thorough-going system of local government to the whole of the United Kingdom, and to Ireland especially, before matters there became more acute. "The worst of it is," he writes July 11, 1886, "that the English do not know how much more

[1] The first Home Rule Bill was defeated in the House of Lords on second reading June 8, 1886.

than other people — than the French, the Germans, the Swiss, the Americans — they are without any system of local government of an effective kind themselves, and what they lose by being without it, so they can the less understand the necessity of granting something of the kind to the Irish, though they see in a dim way what a necessity there is." First he would assert the law with a resolute hand, but that done, he would without loss of time try to remove the causes of discontent. For while "unswerving firmness in repressing disorder is always a Government's duty, so, too, is unswerving firmness in redressing injustice." Conscious of the extravagances of the popular leaders, he nevertheless clung to the belief that responsibility would exercise a sobering influence even there, and in any case he was convinced that "the Castle and its system are as surely doomed as Protestant ascendency."

Nevertheless, Arnold thoroughly disliked the land legislation which was passed for Ireland in 1870, not indeed from a disposition to exonerate the acts of bad landlords, but from distrust of any radical interference with traditional principles of law. He would rather have taken every individual case of alleged injustice on its merits, and guilt having been brought home to a landlord, he would have summarily executed on him justice *forte et dure*. His method of so doing was simplicity itself: "A Commission should draw up a list of offenders, and an Act of Parliament should expropriate them without scruple." There would, of course, be

compensation, though he half regretted it, for he feared it was almost certain to be too generous. English landlords would probably be horrified at such procedure, but that, he told them, was only because they were pedants. For himself the dictum of Burke was convincing, at least in reference to Ireland's agrarian troubles: "The law bears and must bear with the vices and follies of men until they actually strike at the root of order," and a bad landlord was for him a traitor to the commonwealth.

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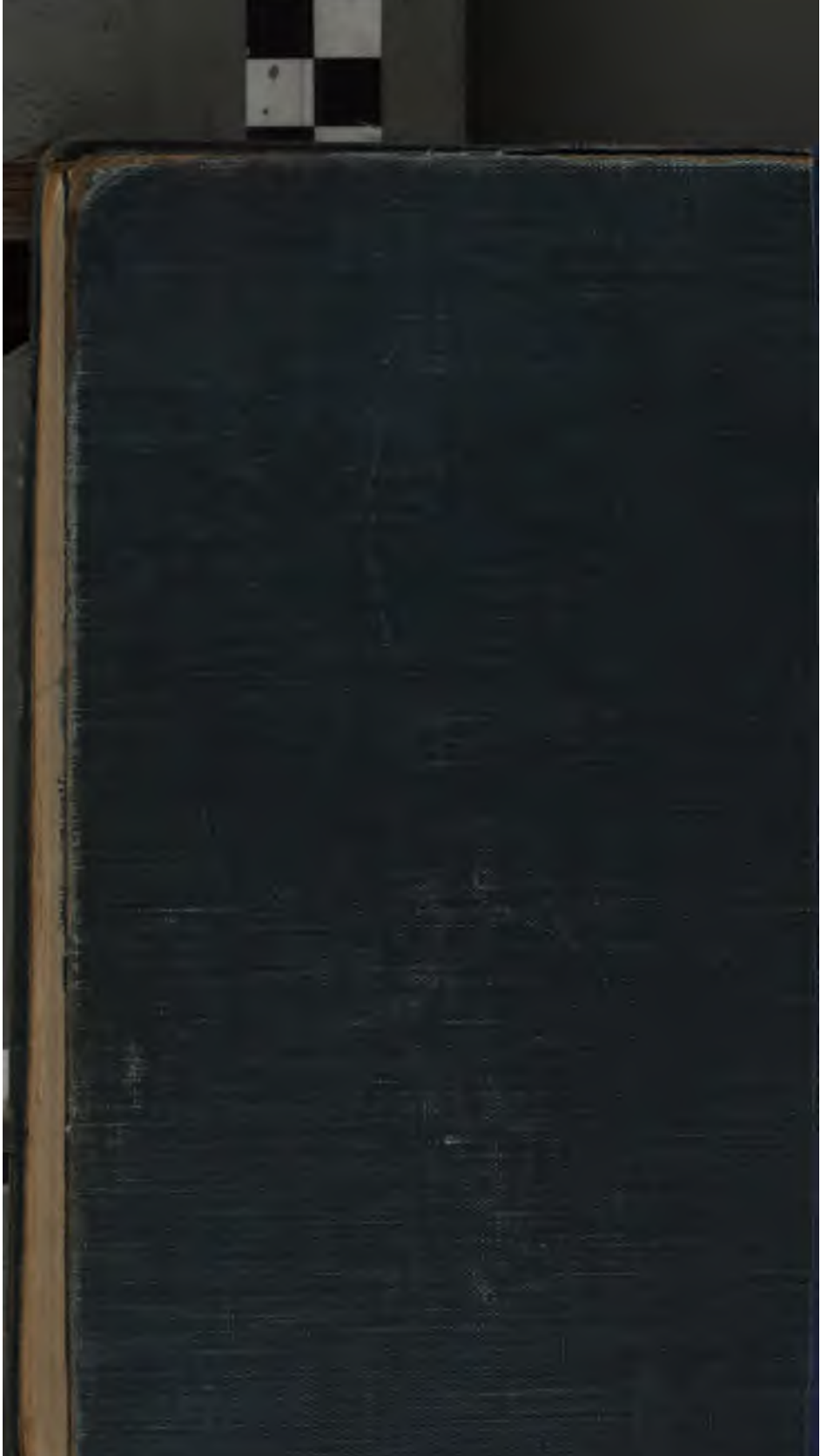
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